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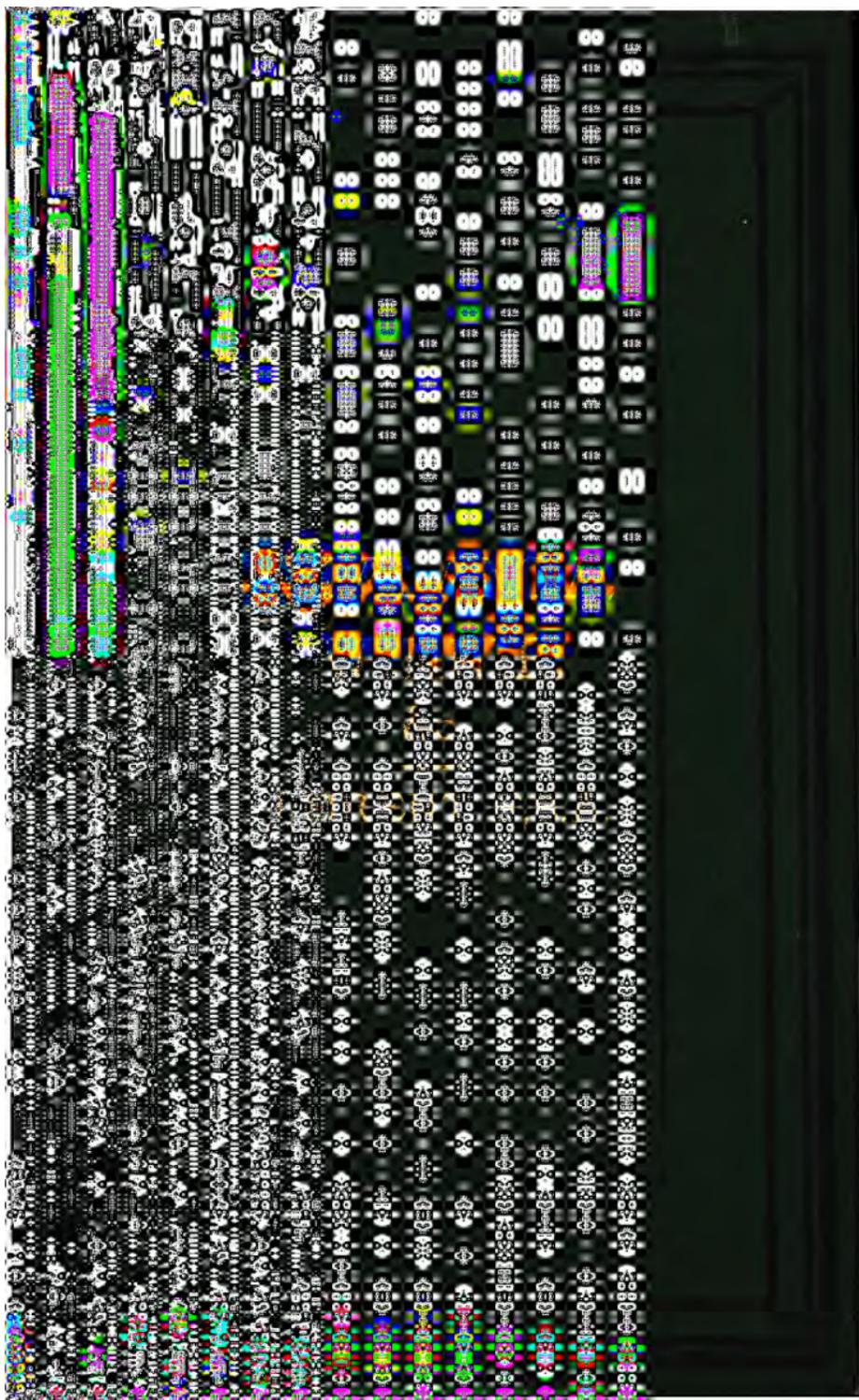
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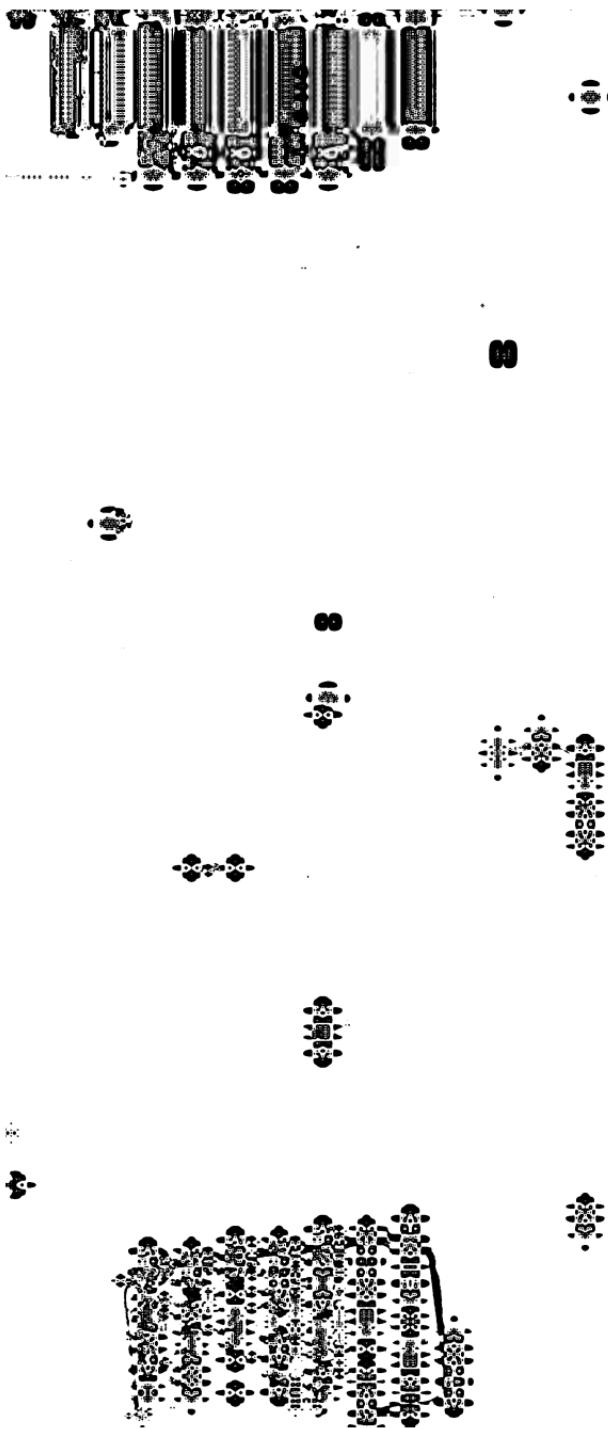
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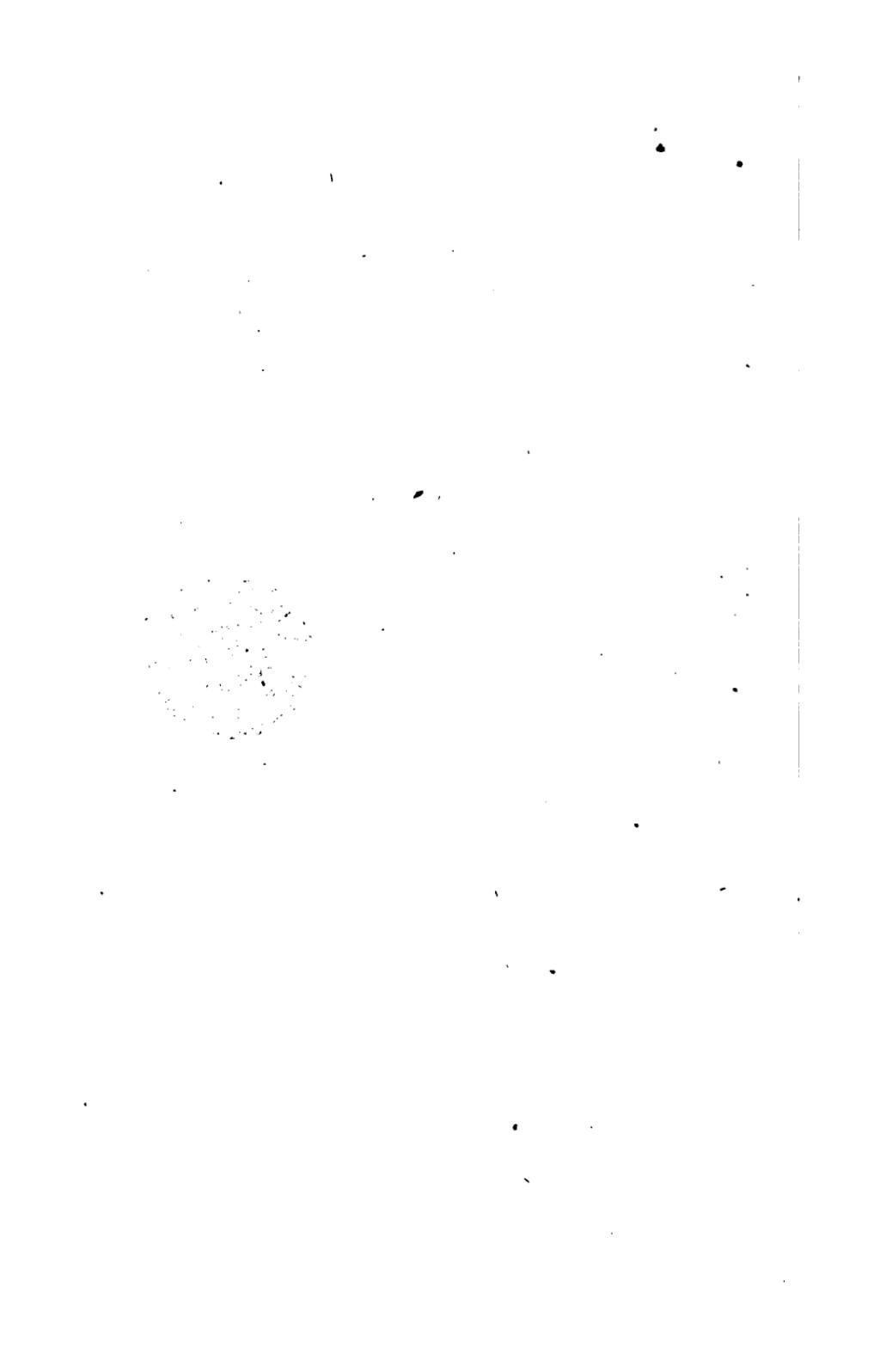
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A T A L A N T A,

Hannie,

AND OTHER POEMS.



BY

JOHN BRENT, F.S.A.,

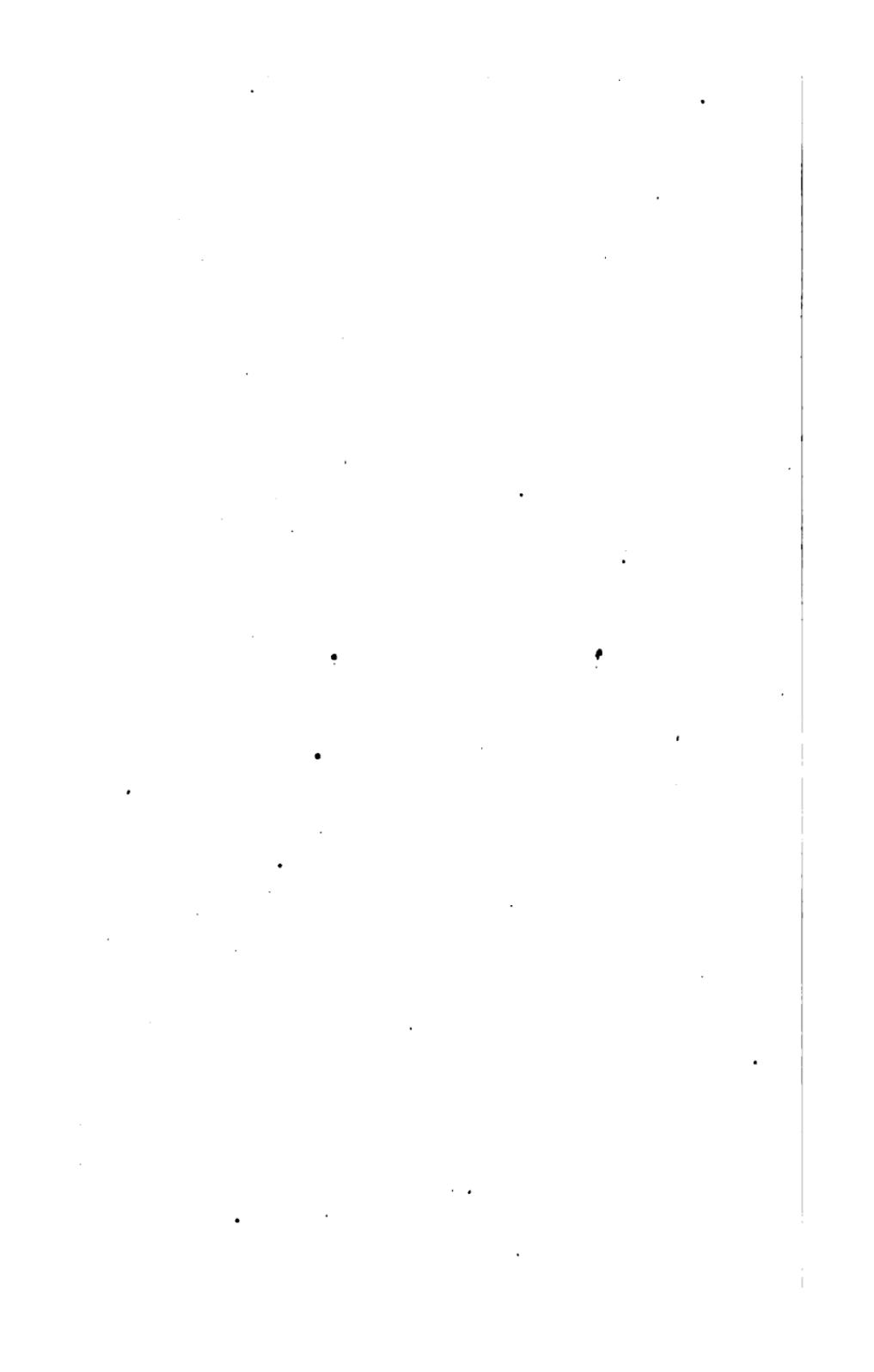
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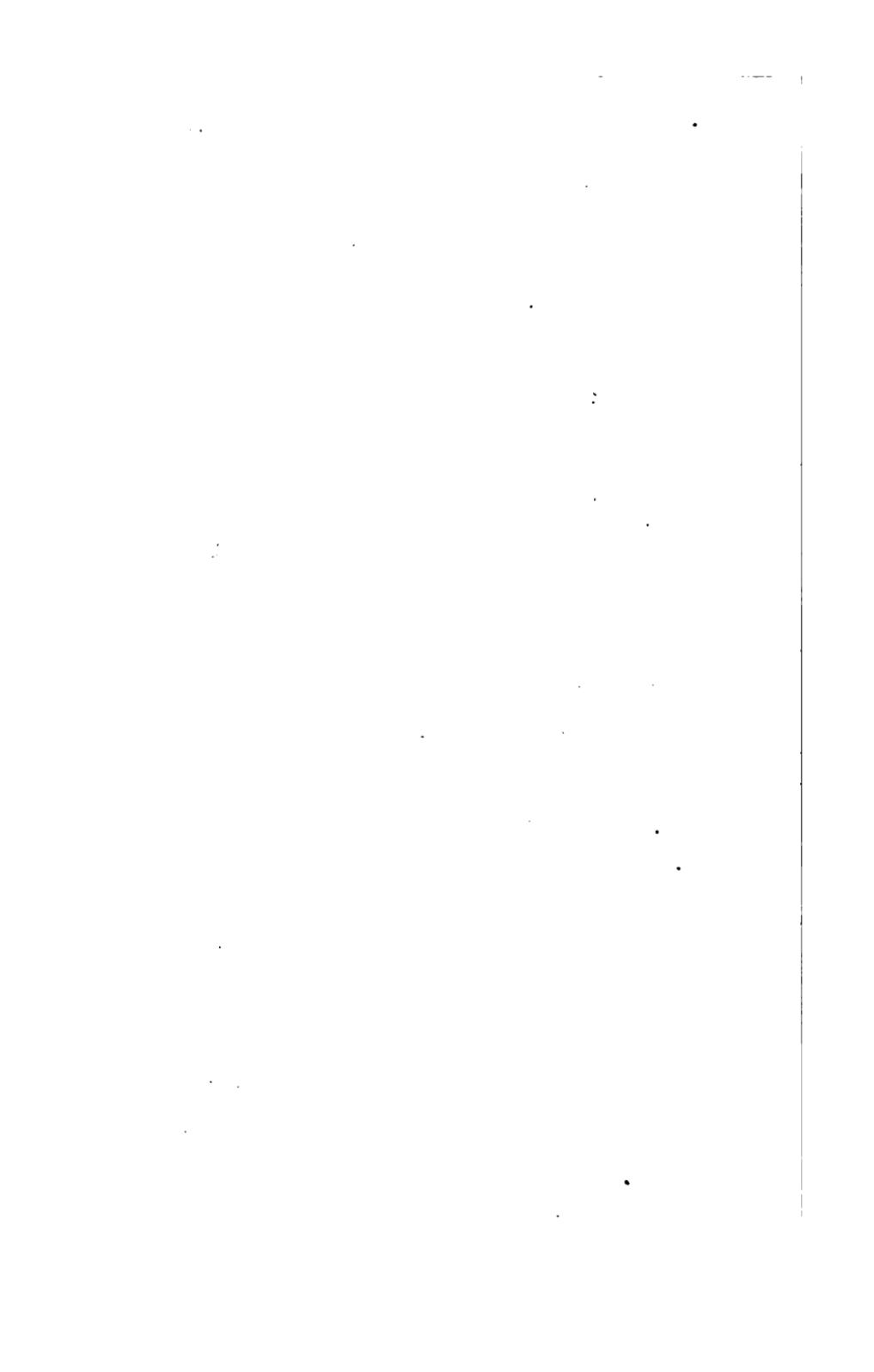


TO THOMAS SIDNEY COOPER, ESQ., R.A.,
THIS VOLUME IS
DEDICATED BY THE
AUTHOR, AS A TRIBUTE TO
THE PAINTER'S UNRIVALLED EXCELLENCE
IN ONE OF THE HIGHEST DEPARTMENTS OF ART,
AND IN EARNEST APPRECIATION OF THE
HONOUR HIS GENIUS HAS
REFLECTED ON
HIS NATIVE CITY OF CANTERBURY.



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PREFACE.

“ATALANTA,” as it takes precedence in order, so also is it the earliest written poem in this volume. I mention a circumstance apparently trivial, to show that I have not entered into competition with the poem entitled “Atalanta’s Race” by the accomplished author of the “Earthly Paradise.” Had my production been unwritten when that piece appeared, I should have hesitated before adopting it as the subject of my verse.

Mr. Swinburne, in his unrivalled poem, “Atalanta in Calydon” has also, at a still earlier period, selected another episode in the charmed history of the same heroine.

As regards the other poems in this book, I consign them, I trust, to an indulgent public.

They may find little favour, and yet receive their due. However, I do not believe that age to be

unpoetical which has produced the masterpieces of the Laureate, the "Andromeda" of Kingsley, the "Ades" of Buchanan, and that tenderest of lyrics, "The Blind Linnet;" I may add to the list, "The Wanderers," "The Gipsy," the "Lays and Legends" of the late A. A. Proctor, and the poems of Owen Meredith and Worsley, which, with many other productions unnamed, are evidences of power and imagination, combined with true poetic fervour.



ATALANTA.

WHEN young oaks budded green, and fluttering
down,
Strewn at their feet lay old leaves sere and brown,
And ash shoots kindled to the western breeze,
To wild Arcadia came Hippomenes.

He heard the lady of the land, the rare
Atalanta, famed by all the bards around,
Was to be won by those who'd spirit to dare;
And so, he deemed himself already crowned:
A kingdom too, himself being born of kings,
And giving to bold thoughts and venture, scope,
And having somewhat of that scorn which springs,
In spite of gentleness, from noble blood,
That a fair girl, scarcely a woman grown,
Should dare contend with heroes. Resolute stood
His vow to conquer; whilst a soaring hope
Filled all his heart, that he might tame the play
Of this young creature's wildness; as his own,
Hold her—avenging slaughtered men who lay
Stretched 'neath earth mounds, or charred to ashes
gray.

Curious, yet careless, with a practised eye
To look on beauty; perhaps, to pass it by

As something for his pastime or his scorn,
Where he as victor through the lists was borne.

Ne'er had he seen the Princess, never known
The dusky light of eyes so sadly sweet—
Sweet with a silent music of their own.
Ne'er had he seen her in the lists compete,
Nor marked the track of light where flashed her
high arched feet.

There was a tablet hung within the fane
Of her who sat enwreathed in lion's mane—
The dread Cybele; awfully there shone
A light on those who gazed from her cold eyes of stone.
Here challengers inscribe their names, and here
A herald 'neath the columned porch proclaims
On certain days, "Atalanta deigns to clear
The lists of all intruders. *She*, who tames
Lions, need conquer men—her spear beware!
'Tis sharp indeed!—they need dare well, who dare."
"I'll see her ere I sign," the young Greek cried;
"Nay, that were base; the stakes upon my side
Are light enough (the lightest, highest soar):
A few brief seasons' hunting of the boar,
Midnight carousals, black-eyed memories
Of syrens, who arose and went as fast
As I could change them—perhaps, this love may
last!

I'm for the lists! (reads the names inscribed).

—What, Spartan Cleon one,
The Athlete! There's some work then to be done

I've seen him throw the discus. Can he run?
Ariston, too, the Isthmæan, long and brown—
A greyhound, with two feet. Oh, how much
more

Success-like if, as greyhound, he had *four*!
Ithocles next! I know the light-haired thing,
And yet a rival of no mean renown.
I've seen him cast a javelin through a ring
At fifty paces. Then the next be mine—
No!—here's Timanthes, swift as Hector's lance,
Yet on his lip, made redder oft by wine,
There lies a stain may lead to his mischance."
He wrote, and left the fane; when lo! afar
He saw a forest lighted: many a spar
Of pine-wood shone mid stems of the weird trees;
The beat of dancing feet came down the wind,
And gushes of soft music, as of bees,
Murmurous of pleasure: dryad-like enshrined,
A flute-like warbling set the leaves astir;
Simmering o'er all, rose laughter wild and sweet,
From merry girls, whose hearts went dancing with
their feet.

Then, suddenly, he started, as a throng
Of damsels, crowned with ditamy and flowers,
Passed by him, singing, rosy as the hours,
Around the Queen of Morning and Delight.
Amidst them moved a lady, shod as light
As skimming sea-bird o'er the crested curl
Of summer wave, when nymphs in boats of pearl
Glide and are gone! So, Atalanta passed.
Ah! he has seen her, then, at last!—at last!

Seen for a moment, as a man may glance,
Some vision in a daylight dream or trance,
And, waking, see a sun; then close his eyes,
Dazzled by brightness and a wild surprise,
And all the darkness glow with thousand dyes.

The young Greek wandered on, lost by that seeing;
Through all his veins a fire electric ran,
As of some purer flame that lit his being,
And stirred, though softened, that too reckless
man.

Then came a sense of fear—his first—of fall
Into some perils: death-like penalties,
Should he not prosper?—lose her? Above all,
Lose all the dusky darkness of her eyes?
Even his hoped-for triumph could he prove,
Would be a hated thing without her love.
He came where stood upon an ancient mound
Seven sacred pines, through which a wind dirged
low,

Muttering, a mass of ferns waved all around;
A group of infants here lay row by row,
Rosy as grass-strewn apples when the sun
Mellows the juice of all he shines upon.

Two ancient nurses watched them, and would beat
With boughs from them away the summer flies and
heat.

This was the favourite of all loved resorts;
For here, young mothers oft in charge would leave
Their infants, when they joined the rustic sports,
Or in the moonbeams danced, on great Diana's eve.

Hippomenes admired the little elves—
Some wondering lay, wide-eyed and cheek to
cheek;
Some clenched their chubby fists and stirred them-
selves;
And others called him “Pappas,” in good Greek.
Musing on this and other abstruse things,
He wandered on; yet, over all, the wings
Of brooding sadness made him quite distraught.
He saw *her* not, yet felt where she had been:
Deemed out of moonlight pure her form was
wrought,
Again dissolved away into the forest green.

Sadly he strayed, as one of hope bereft;
When suddenly there opened a small glen,
With heaths and moss flower braided. The glen
was cleft
Out of the darkness of a grove, and then,
For ever haunted by the mazy whirls
Of dancers, and soft flutes, and laughter sweet of
girls.

Here sat the King upon a rustic throne;
Its wicker-work was white as any bone,
'Neath ivy wreaths in every breeze that float,
Entwined with flowers were all the carved things,
Satyr and faun grotesque, each hoofed like goat,
All offerings, too, were here which nature flings
Into the lap of summer; innocent blooms
Of lilies and white violets; the perfumes

Of cherries ripe and golden grape, and pear,
And honeyed plums and dates, and the musk
orange rare.

For now the lost Endymion they would greet,
And at the cold, yet grieving, Dian's feet
Lay fruits and flowers, and silver cymbals beat.
Here first Hippomenes beheld the group
Of rivals in the lists—Timanthes fleet;
Cleon, of rugged look and ruffian brow;
Ariston, too, the Isthmæan, lean and brown;
Ithocles, once a friend, but hated now—
For love, like Circe, in one goblet blends
Poison and sweets, which when to drink we
stoop,

We know not what to death or madness tends.

But now the flutes wailed low, and shrill between
Soft falls, the little reed-made pipes spoke out;
And then—were they disguised?—swept by a rout
Of fauns and satyrs. The side-shaking King
Laughed at the rabble, called for wine, and blest
His Gods; then drank, then bid the revellers spring
High to the music: “With the noblest guest
Swore Atalanta fair should dance, and lead the
rest.”

Who was the noblest? Here, the heralds give
Much lore to a discussion quaint and fine
Of races; but the King cried, “As I live!
Great Zeus be blessed! my godfather divine!”
With both hands grasped a beaker, brim of wine;
Then pledged the Graces, then the Muses nine;

Then—then—but Atalanta, proudly shy,
Gave young Hippomenes her hand, and cried—
“ Dance we; days hence the heralds may decide,
Night comes, and Dian’s orb floats through a fleet-
ing sky.”
They danced—the leaves danced—the light clouds
that passed
Threw silver shadows dancing o’er the dew ;
And here and there, like shooting stars, there flew
Torches and lights. The stars themselves as fast
Brightened and dimmed, and danced along the
blue;
Sweet laughter its soft whirls of music threw ;
Hearts beat, and footsteps light, went all melodious
too !
Distanced were soon the groups. Where fine haired
grass
With cistus pave and the harebell slight,
Made all a purple island ’mid the trees—
So still, that you might hear the wood nymphs
pass,
Or the low murmurs of belated bees
Now coasting homewards. The lady and her
knight
Then sought repose; and in this calm retreat
Of fairy solitude held converse sweet,
And rested; and the Greek, all loth to part,
Pressed her—but, ah ! so gently—to his heart;
Then, as the stars bent nearer earth, and drew
Spells from the secret woods, their voices grew
Into a murmurous silence. Sweet, though few,

The syllables they uttered; purposeless,
Yet full of meaning—as if each would bless
The other with that trust all loving hearts confess.

And Atalanta rested on his arm,
He saw the long lashed eyelids, and he felt
Her heart's full beatings as the pressure warm
Of one—oh, how beloved!—who seemed to rest,
For stay she needed not. He would have knelt
In adoration, as divinely blest,
Yet, as some long-sought love, 'bove all things rare,
Lay on his heart, she seemed all hallowed there.
He gazed down on her through the shadows dim;
On dew-pressed lips of rose, not pressed by him;
Her gentle bosom's curl-kissed heaving snows,
Whose movements soft just emulate repose,
And rose and fell above her heart; her voice
Now to a whisper given, a murmur low;
So in an intertangled wood rejoice
Two small estrayed birds again that meet,
And on one bough caress, and sink in slumbers
sweet.

“Dark are your eyes, dear Princess.”

“Think you so?

Dark eyes may shroud dark thoughts, and harbour
ill.”

“Ah, so may yours—their darkness is my woe.”

“The stars are fuller for the depths of night,
The perils in the deeds men purpose then,
Not in their holy and mysterious light.”

“You are my starlight, lady, and as bright.
My Pharos too.”

"Beware of shipwrecked men,
Lured by false lights, to their destruction driven.
But, ah, return!" she cried, "Yon lutes complain
I linger here."

"Oh, Princess, would you deign
One moment more to give, 'neath yon blue heaven
To him, your suppliant, doubly doomed to die?"
Then, as a sudden frenzy seized his soul,
He cried, "Oh, kiss me, for my doom is nigh!"
Wondering, she looked, then started with a cry,
"What, you?—you one who in the lists contend?
You're lost! you're lost!" She wrung her hands,
she stood

Dark'as some ominous sibyl of the wood.
The weird trees round her waved in ominous gloom,
The moon sank in a cloud.—"Oh night! Oh
doom!"

She murmured, "very bitter is the end."
With cold white lips—"I ne'er can be," she cried,
"Aught to thee henceforth—neither friend nor bride.
A fate is mine that to its aim will bend
My will; for none can conquer me, I know,
And I to none dare love nor mercy show."
Her flight then madly sought he to restrain.
"Leave me! already you are doomed, and slain."
"No, no," he cried, "the glory of your eyes
Has pity yet for those that it entralls,
Sure, if there glide some goddess from the skies
Earthward, her golden shadow hallowing falls.
It is divine to pity mortal woe?"
A statue spoke, it seemed, and answered—"No!"

“Oh, Princess most adored, the ray that breaks
E'en from the blackest cloud sends warmth and
love.

When last I saw the light upon thy cheeks,
I deemed it summerly, all sweet, to prove
Thou could’st relent, thy triumphs could forego,
And thou could’st love.”

Sternly she answered, “No.”

“Ah, is it thus? In your sweet scorn beware;
There’s nothing for your love, love would not dare,
Though death lay in its path, ‘twere sweet to die,
You, Atalanta, conqueress, standing by;
Tears you, at least, a tributary woe,
Would shed?”

She sighed—“Oh do not trust me—no.”
“Then ‘tis too true, that rumour, dread and chill,
That all who fail to conquer you, you kill?
Then ‘tis too true, around Cybele’s fane,
Stand ashes, all unurned, of men you’ve slain.
Speak! disenchant me, who adore you so,
Say you’re belied.”

“I’ve answered—long ago.”

A step she nearer came, and yet not near.
“The prize is worth the venture. Some have died,
And some have fled outright, ‘tis said from fear.
It may be *once* I turned my spear aside,
Struck with the shaft, I bade a coward go,
Disgraced; Would you a life *thus* rescued owe?
Freely they come from far; and wide are spread
The terms—who win, can claim (my father dead)
His throne, and me, his regal daughter, wed.

None seek me out as woman should be won;
I might, if conquer'd, wed the basest one.
Swift-footed am I deemed! O, how I scorn
This hated gift, curse-freighted. It is sworn
Who fail must perish; hundreds rush to try—
Thousands would venture did not hundreds die.
Retire! there yet is time. Some gentle one
Treasuring her sunlit tresses on your breast,
Lives yet to own a love all unconfessed.
For me, for me! dark sands in silence run.
My love were fatal.—Mortal, darest thou claim
The immortal as thy bride? Wed earth with flame!
My love would come, would be, no chastening
fire,
But all destroying those I most desire."

Sudden she ceased, as breaks a cloud to gold,
Touched by a ray when instant starts the sun
Once more to light, when all his course seemed
done.

So all her features glowed as she were mould
Not of the earth; and like a star burnt low,
There stood a little crescent o'er her brow.

He saw not then her eyes, in which there shone,
The starriness of far-off worlds and lone.
She passed, as on a moonlit river's brim,
Through aisles of waving reeds, like portals dim,
The swan's white shadow seems to glide, not swim;
As passionless seemed she as wandering wind
That makes the dead leaves stir, all noiselessly and
blind.

Yet as she glided, forestward, away,
She turned once towards him, with a bend of the
head

So womanlike, when wilfully unkind,
Yet half repentant, as she wished unread
The thoughts of her around his heart that lay.
Ah, me! he loved her with a love so strong,
It seemed he loved her most when most she could
him wrong.

As doomed man, reckless of all present pain,
Scarce heeding whither, back he strayed again,
Back to the revels. Here, the King, asleep,
Had dropped a silver goblet on the grass;
His courtiers—the best bred ones—strove to keep
Watch till he woke, ere onward sped the glass;
Others, and all the common people there,
Knowing their monarch's custom to sleep well,
The present hour had jovially embraced;
(Devoutly on the royal brows had placed
The priest, a crown of poppies); so they fell
To feast on roasted kid, and venison rare,
And purple clustered grape, and candied citron
fair.

Hark! what was that? A surging stir—a breath
Of wonder, fear, surprise; that grew a cry
Shrill, sharp, as presage of a coming death!
And, see! those three wild women rushing by,
All pointing to a brightening spot where gloomed
Before the Mound the Pine Trees; *there*, entombed,
Lay all the infants, and a fiery wreath
Circled upon them from the furze and heath.

Hippomenes upstarting, with a throng
Of revellers, guests, and women borne along,
Go headlong down the valley—such a rout!
No rain for weeks had fallen; parched and dry
The crackling gorse, all serpent-like, threw out
Red tongues that hissed and shot a scorching
breath,
And, like a furnace, roared the fiery wind with
death.
Some careless reveller had fired the bent—
The nurses, screaming, fled; on rushed the
crowd,
Some wailing, silent some, others aloud
Called on the Gods and fell, fearstricken, speechless,
spent.

Sudden a cry, and, as a meteor bright,
Shot by them Atalanta: scarcely seen,
The way she trod was all a line of light,
Not where she was, but where her steps had
been.

Past each, past all. And now upon the mound,
By twos and threes, within her arms conveyed
The infants, safely soon on cooler ground
Placed round her as she rested. In a nook
Where, on a ledge, sweet heathy moss was laid,
Smiling she sat, and all the groups surveyed.
A little quicker rose her bosom's swell,
A little her impearled lips dispart;
A little—ah, no one could rightly tell
If joy or toil make quicker beat her heart.

All things take change at last; or, changing, end ;
Soft roseate sunsets prelude windy dawns,
And the storm-shadows earthward that contend
Take shape from the small cloud that far off
warns.

Diana's *fête* was over; mothers close,
Shedding wild tears, with wilder joy, around
Their rescued infants. Atalanta rose.
The King and all his host their way had found,
Clamouring upon her footsteps. Soon the array
Of courtiers, King, and people passed away:
Hippomenes, the Greek, remained alone,
His sad eyes following where her steps had gone.

To love—be loved, is life; but if withdrawn
Be light of eyes whose azure softness fell
And violetted life's ways, day without dawn
It is, or night without night's starry spell.
Hippomenes, like one who hears the main
Surging around him, narrowing where he stands
His little strand of life, no hope could gain,
So to no God would lift imploring hands;
Hopeless to hold with fate a moment's strife,
And only hopeful, not to be denied
By her he loved, that yielding up his life
He might embrace her sandals as he died.

Led by some spell into a forest drear,
He went. An awful silence reigned around,
He had no fear of any present fear,
So, reckless, cast him on the charméd ground.

The moon had set, so darkness dowered the night,
The immortal spheres sank one by one in cloud;
When suddenly there gleamed, mysterious, bright,
Phosphor, the star. As man in coffined shroud
Lies dark, and cold, and motionless, so lay
Hippomenes; when, lo! more bright than day,
From heaven to earth through the dim forest slanted
A light, in which a mystic shadow moved
Like mortal shape. Sometimes it nearer came,
And then receded far as it were gone.

"Twas very wonderful to look upon.

Slowly, a sweet voice syllabled his name,
His love applauded, and his cause approved,
And, giving all unasked, gave all he wanted.
"Take heart," it seemed to say, "be not dismayed;
No game is lost till it be fully played,
And love can conquer all, both gods and men,
And love for you has pleaded—ask not when,
For beauty fills the air, the bud, the flower,
And beauty has divinity; the dower
Is she of Love, if not her handmaid too;
For all things loved are beautiful, if true
And loyal to that love. Love is like prayer
That softens; or is like a music rare,
That on rough hearts can fall like incensed dew.
Love takes the highest heights of holiness,
Yet humbly lives on earth with poorest folk no
less.

You shall not fail, for Love will make complete
Her conquest soon. Behold then at your feet,
Rich in all royalty of autumn prime,

Endowed with mystic spells, three apples rare—
One side all golden, like Apollo's hair;
The other rosy, with more delicate streaks
Than make the mysteries of your own love's cheeks.
Arise!—have faith; the apples are your own—
Arise, and take them. In *her* path, if thrown
So that she singly seek them to retain—
(O, look not back when she pursues again!)—
Their beauty shall have spells through her dark
eyes
Her feet to stay, and she will be your prize.”
Then fell a silence, as when snow-flakes fill
The woodpaths, and the conies' feet grow still.

* * * *

A silver mist lay warm on holm and lea
At wink of dawn. Then, soft and dreamily,
Fell light athwart the hills, and diamon'd shone
The long grass and the leaves; and one by one
Cedars and palm trees, lifting in the air
Their verdurous heads, seemed half suspended there
Like apparitions vanishing when seen
Into an unknown world with noiseless tread,
The shadows thin went down the valleys green—
The shadows thin went down unto the dead;
And all men felt the dark-browed night had fled.

An hour ere noon an ancient herald stood
Within the lists, and with a horn at mouth,
Wrought in fantastic shape of brass and wood,
He blew three times to north, east, west and
south,

Bidding all challengers at once appear.
Lo, as he ceased, the Princess' self, drew near,
No state attends her—graceful, moving slow,
She came; a crystal circlet on her brow
Crowned her dark tresses; a robe of purple fold
Enclasped her, cinctured by a cord of gold,
And touched the knees. Upon soft deer-skin white
Twelve gems impearled enclasped her buskins light.
She glanced some dark-eyed meaning at the Greek,
An instant flash—how eyes divine can speak!—
Swept o'er her perfect lips a wave of pride,
Leaving its shadow. With quick hand aside
She dashed a tress that from its band had strayed,
There, statue-like, with fixed cold look, she stayed.
A page stood near who glanced at her, anon,
Then at the spear he held; as his hand shook it
shone.

Next comes the King, from revels late and deep,
A King most potent, save 'gainst wine and sleep.
His men of state surround him, and a band
Of archers—the policemen of that land.
Then flock the people in, and then there stirs
A murmurous whisper as the challengers
Step forth; and as a little wave will break
Upon the beach, and be a wave no more,
Sudden, a silence. Then the King before
They place a silver vase. The heralds shook
The names within; then Atalanta took
The spear, and touched its edge, and felt her
ground—
One little foot thrown forward for a bound.

Cleon stepped forth, as if he were defied.
The King turned on the bandit, leopard-eyed.
A bull's-hide belt, brass-rimmed, his waist engrasped,
'Neath which, when heaved his shoulder-blades,
 there shone
What seemed a jewel in rude setting clasped—
A dagger's point! None marked it; none, save
 one—

Hippomenes. He, fearful lest befall
Some ill to his dear Princess, wildly loved,
Bade the near archers note it. One and all
They rushed on Cleon; seized him suddenly.
He, fiercely turning, boar-like, to their cry,
What treason he might harbour? grimly stood;
Then said, "To the sharp spear he meant reply,
If vanquished, by his dagger—blood for blood!"
Atalanta, listening, smiled disdainfully;
Not so the aged King: he, fiercely moved,
Shouted, "Away! the boiling spring is nigh;
'Tis in a cavern dark—*there* be his tomb!"
Down through a rock that overlapped the plain,
They lowered him, fighting, with brute strength
 amain.

There, twice a-day the hungry waters swell,
Boiling and foaming. On a slab of stone—
A sort of seat—the captive counteth well
His hour or two of life, in groan by groan.
He sees the waters steaming through the gloom,
Hissing, red-eyed; then, with a scream, they come,
And drag the throttled wretch down swiftly to his
 doom.

Meanwhile, the Præces of the Lists arrived.
A staff he bore of silver braided wire,
Hung round with golden bees. They who survived
The Princess' iron spear, red-edged with fire,
Grasped it as victors. Great as their desire,
The staff remained untouched, the golden bees
unhived.

“Draw forth the lots!” the aged monarch cried.
And now a pillar was afar espied,
Set up six stadia down the course. ‘Twas there
Each runner turned at speed back to the Præces’
chair.

“Bring me the vase: * each challenger shall try
His chance—the first to conquer or to die!”
Hippomenes drew forth a name—his own!
What sudden murmur when that name was known!
Pale, earnest faces looked on him, and then,
By some strange instinct, turned as suddenly
On Atalanta. Of heroic mould
She seemed to grow; and how supernly fair!
‘Twas the wild fancy, perhaps, of women, men,
Gazing on things divine with earthly ken;
Yet ‘twas as if she noted, in mid air,
Wonderful sights. How firmly in command
The spear she held! how glanced then at the sky,
With such a look as Gods might Gods defy!
Hippomenes turned round; for close at hand

* Silver vase, inclosing pellets on which the name of the competitor was inscribed, or his initial.—“Archæologia Græca,” p. 342.

He knew her page, who touched his arm, who low
Murmured, "O, lost one, fly! None can with-
stand

The will of fate, nor save thee!"

"Be it so,"

He signalled more than said. One look she threw
Reproachful, sad; then—as the end she knew—
She turned from him for ever, ne'er again
To gaze on one now numbered with the slain.
With a wild storm of uncouth horns at last,
The lists were opened. One by one, there passed
The challengers before the Praeves' chair. He
cried—

"The Princess, of her courtesy, in this field,
Some paces to each rival deigns to yield.
Beware! all further favour is denied!
Beware! the swiftest runner may not flee
A swifter death. So Gods and Fate decree!"

Hippomenes stood forth, and took his ground;
And, as he smiled, a murmur uncontrolled
Buzzed all anear as he were overbold;
Though some from his proud bearing understood
Not vain his boast of Heracleidan blood.
He looked not back, yet felt the loved one near
Prepared to slay him. Ah, as one who stands,
And knows a foe is coming, and red brands
To raze his home, and all he holds most dear,
He trembled, as he thought e'en Gods might
cheat
And love prove false—yet now was no retreat.

Once more the heralds blew. The eager throng
Rushed to the front, the ancient king threw down
His sceptre, and the race was on. O, crown
Of glory, blood-stained, yet withheld too long !
The Greek, resolved to die or win renown,
First reached the pillar. First the turn he cleared
Back through the lists. Some would have met the
shock
Of that fierce man to stay him; some had cheered,
When suddenly, like "falcon of the rock,"
Through sky rift blue, in storm cloud edged with
flame,
Swift on her quarry, Atalanta came.
He reeled—now desperate as all hope had flown—
Yet whether from his vest 'twere cast or fell,
Right in her way a glittering apple shone.
Instant it stayed her speed. Ah, wondrous spell,
With wondrous beauty too—ruby as wine.
Touched on proud Ida's heights by lips divine,
It glanced; then soft as dove's neck's opaline
From gules to amber, paled. With motion rife,
Within its rind there glowed a mystic life.
Towards her it moved as if to be caressed;
She stoops, she grasps it, stores it in her vest.
Yet no delay, the people shout; again
Her feet grow winged, and scarcely touch the
plain.
He falters, for he knew she came, she came!
Then on the turf another apple shone
Redder than blood, sun-fired, all life-like, warm,
Breathing out nectarous odours like a charm.

Tis hers! like rushing wind she passed to claim
The race—"Atalanta!" How they hailed that
name!

Expectant e'en the Praeves lowered his rod.
"No, by great Zeus!" the people shouted, "No!"
Her spear was raised to smite him? Then was cast
The latest apple flashing to the sod.

Swooping she caught it, kite-like, as she passed.
Too late!—the Greek had power to cast him on
The staff of golden bees; and grasp it as he won.
Then staggered, as the great hills reeled around,
But every bud and tree with rosy wreaths grew
crowned.

With a wild sob, upon her knees she fell:
"Lost, lost!" she cried, "the Fates dissolve their
spell;
O, smite me to the death—the spear is thine
By right of conquest."

"Loved one, and divine,"
He said, and, raising, pressed her to his heart.
"The Fates their wands may sunder—never more
we part!"

Blushing and enchanted then she stayed
Beside him. A soft wind came from the south;
It made music as her tresses heaved and swayed
O'er her heart as her young lover kissed her mouth.
Her father o'er her shoulders proudly threw
A rich mantle, clasped with clasps of gold,
The victor held the silver cord which drew
The cincture round her waist with reverend fold.

Then heralds robed Hippomenes, and crowned
His brows with olive, following customs good,
And children scattering flower wreaths round and
round,
With roses isled the turf whereon they stood.
Then Jasius* hailed his son elect by name,
As from a purple cloud were seen to glide
Two doves, pearl white; the people with acclaim
Beheld them circle three times o'er the bride.
The rivals in the lists obeisance make,
Her sandals kissing with a reverent fear,
She, sweetly smiling, said, "Good sirs, you take
Pains needless; *He* 'twas saved you from the
spear.
Quick, archers!" Then she cried, "Away, away!
Haste, save the wretched Cleon from his doom,
The waters bide our bidding, and this day
No death shall dim our conquest with its gloom."
Then Atalanta's grand eyes lit with fire,
A step advanced, she seemingly arose
From mortal to divine; and her attire
Looked winged or wing-like, from her shoulders
shone
A splendour, and her voice was far and lone.
"Away, dark Fates!" she cried; "Back, back once
more
Into primeval night; new dawns disclose
Soft summers, for life's roses erst which bore
Their buds in springs of storm and winter snows.

* Atalanta was daughter of Jasius, by the goddess Ceres.

Bursting an iron chain henceforth the heart
Shall claim its right to guide the ways we tread.
The will be free, each mortal own his part
For good or ill, nor plead the gods misled.
Yet it may be, hate, fears, and pain will rise,
And conquerors on the blood-red waves of strife
Walk dry-shod for a time; the test which tries
Man's manhood shall lie deeper than his life.
Aye, in a future. Know ye not we live
Darkly on earth? Let conscience be our will,
We mount through night to stars. The Gods shall
give
Requitals to the good works and the ill.
Then raise the hymn to Love, the God who feeds
Our pulses with delight, whose softening spell
Puts in the infant's hand the cord which leads
The lion tamed and mastered to his cell.
To Love, the immortal—Love who ever brings
All nature into harmony divine;
Makes desert ways run silver-bright with springs,
And to the poor man's fare adds golden wine.
Love, the first-born, yet youngest of the Gods,*
Tender and moving, delicately strong,
Invisible, as the tall wind which nods
The cedars, yet as beautiful as song.
Then raise the hymn to Love—to Love once more.
I hear, I hear soft voices gathering round,
Far waves of music from some heavenly shore,
And one sweet ecstasy of breathless sound."

* Plato's "Banquet of Socrates."

She ceased, her temples throbbing; then again
He took her hand. She answered him with love.
She said, "Life's sweet humanities shall reign
With us and our best household gods shall prove;"
Then spoke he low, in words 'twixt joy and fear—
"How wild I loved to take so much on trust!
Ah! had I failed would you have used that spear?"
"Dear love, if you *had failed*, you know I must."
Then in a long procession they drew near
To royal halls, and still the wind came south.
"O, cheaply won!" she whispered. "Won, how
dear!"
He said, and kissed her on her sweetest mouth.

W I N N I E.

THE SQUIRE.

ADOWN a hillside lane, one summer's day,
Mounted on his stout cob, as near he drew
To the old house that in the valley lay,
Squire Melbrun paused, the landscape fair to view ;
The Grange below, the park lands, and the deer,
And glowing corn fields rippling far and near—
Mostly his own. The setting sun now threw
Long shadows o'er the meadows from tall trees.
The air was full of melodies of bees,
The church afar shot up its slender spire,
Crowned by its glittering vane, like tongue of fire.
Yes, well beloved by tenants, neighbours, too—
The Squire would make all happy whom he knew.
His thoughts were pleasant; all seemed passing fair,
And golden as the corn and sunny air.
The rein thrown lightly o'er his horse's neck ;
His horse—a careful creature—seemed to share
His master's thoughts, as now through chequered
shade,
Where winking sunlight glanced through hazel
boughs,
Slowly he paced, and not a stumble made.

"I'll build a school-room near our Parson's house!"
Exclaimed the Squire; "repair the market cross;
And Winnie Sandford, that most quiet lass—
(I wonder the young fellows let her pass!)
So well she teaches in the parish school,
By innate gentleness much more than rule—
I'll give her a small pension, if befit,
Ere many months—at least, I'll think of it.
Her father's but a peasant, waxing old,
And yet 'the man, and not the rank's the gold.'
A little plot of land might suit him well;
There's just a strip to spare in Holden Fell."
So mused the Squire; yet oft would he delay,
Nursing his best resolves, from day to day.

Hugh Melbrun had few foes—his tenants thrrove;
Game filled his coverts; yet if poachers drove
His pheasants to their snares, ah! then he swore;
Then, "Justice stern, unpaid," his state he kept.
The poacher caught, he fined the fellow well;
But if his wife or little daughter wept,
(Full many lived the passing jest to tell),
He paid the fine himself, and something more!

Day still—at least enough of day to trace
A softened and mysterious gleam that fell,
Mingling the cloud and mountain, stream and
dell;
As oft we note on some loved dying face,
As wanes the life-lamp o'er the features cast
A sad, sweet light that lingers to the last.

Now labour ceases; yet the twilight speaks,
The brook's soft ripple into music breaks;
Yet all seems still, and o'er the heavens afar
A sense of the vast infinite prevails,
As through the dim cloud tissue slowly sails,
Into its depth of blue, a planet star.

The Squire scarce noted this, not this his mood,
No sense of beauty fine his soul imbued;
And yet he said, "There's surely something
good

In sights like these, in Nature's varied plan,
I think—it makes me feel an humbler man."

Now, nearer home, within a shady dell,
A cottage stood, around whose doorway ran
Roses and bindweed;—there did Winnie dwell.
Here paused the Squire abruptly. In the air
A something—a white shadow, something fair—
Moved, and then glided back, as if afraid.
"What! Winnie Sandford! ho!"

Then Winnie stayed.

"Come here—I have a plan. What, child! in
tears?"

She strove to go; she was in haste to pass.
"Get me a rose from out your garden; so,
Thank you; and now attend, for I will know
What is your cause of sorrow, little lass?"

"Nothing; O, nothing—pray sir, let me go!"
"Child," said the squire, quite sternly, "Winnie,
no!"

Then Winnie sobbed, then ceased, as if she'd
caught

Some glimpse of hope, some gleam of brightness
wrought,

From his half-pitying look—

“O, sir, to-day,
My father's been discharged by Farmer Graye—
We leave next week our cottage!”

“What!—by whom?
By Farmer Graye?—You *shall* not quit your home.”
“We must—we must!”

Then, with beseeching look
And clasped hands, she stood in that dim nook,
Half hid in braided hedgerow of the lane.

“I will know all, there is some mystery deep;
Speak out, poor lassie—”

Winnie could but weep.
“Tell me,” he cried, “for to deceive were vain.”
Perplexed and puzzled, with some misty gleam,
That her confusion made the greater seem,
The Squire still questioned.

“Ah, I see—I see!
Young Graye, young Harry—the old tale must be
Ever renewed, as leaf on leaf uncloses,
Spring buds to some day turn to summer roses!”
Then Winnie told her story, checked by tears,
And sobs jerked oft her broken words among,
How she and Harry Graye, these last two years,
Had loved each other; how 'twas very wrong
For her to think of him.

“He would not go,”

Oft as she begged, nor let his father know;
But when at last he did—O, what a page
Of grief was opened—what dark words of hate!
“What! wed a peasant’s daughter?” Such his rage
He drove at once poor Harry from his door—
“No son of mine,” he cried, “be evermore!”
Nor was that all; no moment would he wait,
But sent for Winnie’s father; for the week
Paid him, discharged him, ruthless bade him seek
Another master. “Beyond a week that day
He in the cottage not an hour should stay!”
“So father, mother, houseless, we must go,
Whither?—from our old home we do not know!”
“Hold, silly child! I think I’m master here.
Why, nearly all the land in Helmsdale’s mine.”
(The Squire presumed upon his right divine.)
“The cottage is our master’s,” sad and low,
Said Winnie.

“Yes, he bought it years ago,
Merely to spite our parson, who required
The little garden, which his wife admired.
But bid your father in the morning come,
I’ll find him some employment, and a home.
Yes, yes, another cottage—I’ve a score
Of cottages, and land for hundreds more.”
“O, sir, to quit so neat a little place,
Where all our lives—”

“Winnie, your silly face
Has wrought this mischief; but what’s done, is
done.
Your grandsire was a farmer, I’ve been told,

But he lost all; muddled his wealth away,
And went, with the 'Camp People,' miles to pray,
Instead of making hay in breeze and sun.
He lies, without a headstone to his grave,
In yon churchyard. He left his sons to fight
With poverty, and peasants' portions share.
Well, such things must be. Winnie, child, good
night!

I'll come and talk with you another day."
"O, sir! you'll speak a word for Harry Graye?
His father is so wroth!"

"A word?—aye, two;
And perhaps, my little girl, a word for you!"
No answer reached him; Winnie's passing prayer
Died, as a silent echo, in the air.

Her father, mother, now came home; they went
And sat down in the cottage porch, and heard
What Winnie had to tell.

"My time is spent;
My master has discharged me. I shall find
Another soon, to poor men ever kind,"
Her father said. "Winnie, for you, some day,
Good times may come."

The mother spoke no word,
But kissed her child, and, heart full, turned away.

THE GRANGE.

SQUIRE Melbrun soon at his old home got down.
Lights from each mullioned window broadly shone,

For guests had come. The gentle Everard,
From college just arrived, his last term o'er.
A brave youth he: wit brings its own reward.
His *forte* in cricket lay; in boating more;
Rowing 'gainst time—no need to study hard,
Nor to read deep, to keep up the old name,
The ancient Melbrun hunt, the Melbrun fame
For a broad hospitality that drew
E'en foes to meet, old friendships to renew.
"I hope he'll marry soon, and wisely, too,"
His father said; "some gentle, well-dowered lass.
Wedlock's an Asses' Bridge, so hard to pass
Without a stumble. Everard is no fool—
Clever enough; but that, I fear's no rule.
He's young: these county girls, on conquest bent,
Hold in my halls a Ladies' Tournament,
Armed cap-à-pied. Our Everard's April yet;
But May and June within my house have set
A gage to win him, break a fairy lance—
There's ne'er a lass but deems she has a chance.
All may prove well; yet unexpected things,
Like Duncan's ghost, may mar the rest of kings."

The Grange was full: late dinner, then a ball;
The "Cedar" chamber lit like fairy hall,
To enchant the senses. O! thou flush of youth,
And joyous dreams of constancy and truth—
When all things seem of beauty, and soft eyes
Look bashful down, and then with sweet surprise
Look up, and from their quivers forth again,
Send shafts that wound, yet conquer without pain!

Young Everard from these jousts eventful, went
 To rest, twice conquered in the tournament;
 In love with life, with beauty, all things fair;
 But most with Alice Clive and Mary Clare.

'Twas a grand night. The Squire, good-tempered,
 shrewd,
 Was pleased, yet glad 'twas over; for he viewed,
 By faded lamps, these things—scarce now desired—
 A gentle lad, his son, and much admired.
 Yet, spite of all, a subtle knowledge played
 Around the old man's fancy; and he knew
 • Much of that pleasing animation drew
 Its brightest spells from Melbrun Hall and glade;
 Yet it were well to pass o'er thoughts like these;
 Who most delight us, most may wish to please;
 And they who flatter, sometimes converts make
 Of their poor selves, for their poor conscience' sake.

THE FARMER.

HALF horse, half man—the Centaur of the day—
 Two feet fixed firm, whilst two to plunge essay;
 A politician strange was Farmer Graye.
 He loved all laws that did his game protect,
 Scorned all control that his wild will had checked.
 Deemed women should knit socks, or barefoot go,
 Called all men "brothers," never made them so;
 What cash he saved was loaned at twelve per cent.,
 Yet grieved his landlord's lands should yield a rent;
 Held foreign ways and foreign men in scorn,

But most the “villains” who imported corn.
Yet, as the harshest glebe by sun and air
Is mellowed, and a harvest rich may bear,
Some germ may live, some seed the soil may suit,
To yet expand in flowers, and yield its fruit,
So, ‘neath an aspect rough, scarce understood,
Unsightly, hard, there yet lurked something good.
A gentle creature ever, Ruth, his wife,
Redeemed his household from perpetual strife;
Too yielding perhaps; but neighbours all confessed,
Graye in his only son was truly blest.
And yet the fruit on which the sunbeams fall
Is often sour, and bitter, next the wall;
And sweetness, only sweet, may turn to blight,
And mock the taste though it has charmed the sight;
So in the radiant smile and laughing eye
Shadows may lurk, to deepen by and bye.
Great was Graye’s anger, without stint and wild,
To find his son could love a peasant’s child.
Harry, like one between two rocks who steered—
The love he cherished, and the sire he feared—
Found all submission vain. He sought each spot
Winnie once haunted—there, to find her not;
Then knew her lost, when most he deemed her
true!
Loved most when most unhappy! Obey, he knew,
She would his father, with a sense of pride,
That scorned to plead, where sure to be denied.
Ah! oft had Winnie’s gentle words, like dew,
Fallen, as a softening influence on his soul
When angered by his sire beyond control;

As in dim woods, sometimes, and twilight dells,
Where blue bells grow, a purple shadow dwells,
That all the weirdsome loneliness dispels,
So Winnie's eyes and Winnie's smile intrude,
And haunt him like the Spirits of the Wood—
Haunt him, how long? When, absent, yet may rise,
Visions less fair, to charm his wandering eyes.

Within a week, the Farmer from his door
Looked out, and marked the daisies clustering o'er
The "Lees," as here and there a thistle's head
Its winged seeds, like poisoned arrows, shed;
The swallows, twittering from the thatch above,
Looked down on Graye as one they did not love.
He felt this, felt he was not liked, poor man!
"He'd harry all those swallows, kith and clan;
Plough up the 'Lees,' and pare, and burn, and
sow;
Instead of daisies, golden corn should grow;
No gleam of scarlet poppies should make gay
The chalk hill's side, and starve his clover lay.
All this and more he could do, if he tried;
But could he make folks love him? No!" he cried.

But who is this on horseback drawing near?
His well-known broad brim seen the hedge above.
Squire Melbrun? Ah! and what hath brought
him here?
"To raise my rent? He thinks too well I've throve.
He's not been nigh since last election, when
I pleased myself, and voted 'gainst his men!"

At this, indeed, the Squire had waxed full warm,
And swore (words only) "Graye should quithis farm!"
But now it was, "Good morning! What fine wheat,
And beans, too, neighbour. Surely quite a treat
To see such farming! What tenant could I find
In skill to match you?"

"Ah! what's in the wind?"
Said Farmer to himself—civil, of course—
He moved to help his landlord from his horse.
Both entered—seated—

"Neighbour Graye, I know
We had a little difference, months ago:
'Tis passed—forgotten. You can understand?
Let 'bye-gones' be. The matter I've in hand
Is this, my friend. You have an only son;
A fine young fellow—steady, too, I'm told?
Ah, youth will oft a course most headstrong run.
Well, we were boys once; there's a gentle child,
Fair Winnie Sandford? I hear she has beguiled
The young man's heart? Come neighbour, come,
forgive,
And join their hands? We both are getting old,
Let's make the young folks happy?"

"Happy? Nay!
I did not think, Squire Melbrun," answered Graye,
"In this you'd meddle—rule o'er me or mine,
And settle my affairs, and give away
My son, or anything I hold mine own.
I till your land, hedge, drain, work night and day;
And now you come to reap where you've not
sown."

Annoyed, provoked, unused to be denied,
The Squire moved towards the door, then paused—
replied,
As mildly as he could—

“I dictate?—No!

I asked you to forgive. Yes, to forego
All prejudice. Reflect—the girl is good.
There's many a gem shines from a setting rude.
Would I'd a daughter like her. The father's poor;
I'll lift him in his station for the sake
Of little Winnie. Graye, her heart will break.
Besides, your son and she have plighted troth:—
He loves her; make him happy—make them
both!”

“Squire Melbrun,” answered Graye, “you have no
right
To enter on this quest; nor ground, nor plea,
To fire this rick betwixt my son and me.
The usages of ‘class’ and wealth, I know
Give power, and oft make suppliants to the will
Of the poor serfs the rich man's lands who till.
You grant no leases, year by year, reserve
Your thongs to lash the serfs who will not serve
Your will—caprice; but *there* your power expires:
You shall not set the boy's will 'gainst his sire's.
Marry that girl! To put this on the shelf,
And show you how you battle 'gainst yourself,
Pluck up the flaunting poppies of your pride;
Aye, foil you at your weapons. Come, we will
say,
Your Everard loves my niece, Euphemia Graye?

You'll join their hands? Not, if her heart be won?

Not, if they're pledged? I ask——”

“Your niece, *my son!*”

Exclaimed the Squire. “What, think you I'd abide To such a contract? What, that vulgar thing, That jerks into the church pew with a swing, Plumed, powdered—red; face, ribbons, petticoat! My son! why this beats twenty times your vote—Never!” Then swift in wrath, and at a stride, He reached the door. Then Graye, though pale, replied—

“Squire Melbrun, I have used no word of scorn Against your ‘pet,’ low bred and beggar born. Sir, you insult me in my brother's child. Good morrow—best we part.”

He grimly smiled, Offering his hand to aid his landlord mount. The latter spoke not. As he rode away, He muttered, “Winnie! Ah, we did not count On such a Ranter. *We* have lost the day!”

THE FEVER.

NEARLY a year had gone; again the wheat Bowed to the breeze in wavy breadths of bloom, Deepening its purple; wild thyme scented sweet, And hedgeside woodbines breathed a faint perfume. Then fell the wind, and all things bowed and glowed. And the dry clods with seeds were sowed in vain. The glittering air shimmered o'er land and road,

As slowly passed a blight the fields adown;
The delicate wheat-blooms, fairy amber flowers,
That danced on threads of light, grew withered,
brown;
A dark spell came upon the corn, and showers
Of winged things made thick the air, and all
The evil most on Farmer Graye did fall.
His cattle died; and in one hot night's mist
There came a shadow to his door. He wist
Not what it was. It cried, "At length I come,
A guest unbid, to make your house my home."
His niece died soon; then was Squire Melbrun
moved,
That words of his had that poor girl reproved.
The Farmer's wife long battled with the foe,
Weaker and weaker. Soon a sense did grow
Of desolation in that smitten home.
The son some months before had left;—none knew
Whither he'd gone;—in "gold fields," perhaps, to
roam
And win a fortune? Pacing to and fro,
The Farmer looked upon his wife, as low
Her moanings smote his ear, and smote his heart.
At first she murmured for her son, and sighed
As for one dead. This was a bitter part
To bear; but she soon changed her tone, and cried,
"She was alone—uncared for"—('twas not so,
She had a nurse). "Ah, yes; would no one go
And bid the little Winnie Sandsford come?
Sure she would tend on Harry's mother—*she*
Who might ere long her own loved daughter be?"

Then quicker strode the Farmer o'er the floor,
And sometimes stopped, and looked upon his wife—
Sternly, it might be; for his passion's strife
Ran high; then pity softening, would come o'er
His heart, and old affections; and he stood
And smote his brow, and to the bedside drew,
And said, "Old dame, I'll be a nurse to you."
"You cannot—no. Ah, would you have me die?
There's only one can save—let Winnie try."
But he stood firm; yield this, he must yield all.
He sue to Winnie!—*he* on Winnie call?
Seek that poor dwelling whither he had sent
Her father, mother, in their banishment?
No!"—but he must! The nurse would stay no
more,
Angered or frightened—so, one dark day o'er!
The shadows deepening, Ruth with wandering
mind,
Moaning for Winnie with glazed eyes, half blind,
That searched for her around the room, he cried—
"The curse was on his home, his heart, his pride!
What matter, then!" The door flung wide, he fled,
"To bring the living there to nurse the dead."
As one of old, in seven-leagued boots, so strode
The Farmer, till he came, where, off the road,
Close to the park gates, in uneven row,
Lay a few cottages: where Winnie dwelt,
He rightly knew not, nor had cared to know;
So, groping by the darkness of a moon,
Whose clouded light was far less seen than felt,
Doubting, he searched—his search not over soon.

Through one small window, lit by firelight gleams,
He saw where, chin to knees, an old man dozed;
The next, a dog on a rough mat reposed,
Who woke and growled, with an instinctive sense:
Graye was a man dogs hated in their dreams,
And snarled at when awake—so moved he hence;
Tried a few doors on further. Here, a flame
Of lamp showed a girl reading; then he knocked—
“Come in,” a voice so faintly said, it shocked,
Or rather awed him. The shadows of the room
Stirred on the whitewashed walls in gleam and
gloom.

He entered, greeting. Winnie, with a cry,
Upstarted—“You have driven him forth to die!
Your son! your son!”

“No!” answered Graye, amazed;
Then, earnestly, on that slight form he gazed—
Taller, more womanly, yet deadly fair,
Winnie had sunk back trembling in her chair.
Yes, there she sat, and o'er her brow she drew
Her fingers, as if smit by sudden pain,
Then suddenly her earnest eyes again
Were fixed on Graye.

“Ah, what fresh crime had wrought
The cruellest man that ever lived?” she thought.
“I come,” said Graye, in faltering words—“I
come—”

Then quick, “There's fever, Winnie, in my home;
My poor old dame is down, but still her cry
Is aye, ‘Let Winnie nurse me!’—Will you try?
And all shall be forgotten.”

“Forgotten?—No!”

Cried Winnie, “Forgotten!” Then a sudden glow
Passed o'er her face;—“Not for my father's sake.
What had *he* done? You strove his heart to
break,
His brave, kind heart; but the good Squire stepped
in.
You would have killed him!”

“Winnie, lass,” said Graye,
“Truly, I never knew you till this day;
You've a rare spirit. What! was it a sin
To send my labourer off when I no more
Needed his service? Well, my wrong I own
To you and Harry. Ah! poor Ruth, alone,
Seems left me. Perhaps misfortunes may atone
A little for my harshness—grief don't kill,
They say—or rarely.”

“Is she very ill?”

Said Winnie, gently, with relenting sigh.
“I'll ask my father—perhaps, then—by and bye.
He'll let me come.”

“Ill, Winnie? like to die!
I would not have her pass when quite alone;
She always loved thee, lass—not I, I own.
But that is over; I'm a broken man.
Half of my crops is lost; my cattle gone.
I don't feel right—I'll do the best I can.
Maybe, she's going?” Then he turned aside,
In his dark eyes a passing mist to hide.
“Oh, Winnie, come! Sit up with wife to-night,
And perhaps you'll save her!

I will urge no more."
He said, and moved in silence to the door.
* * *

"Hush!" said a sweet voice, towards the break of
day,
As in a room one night stole Farmer Graye,
And sought to draw a curtain.

"Hush! she sleeps!"
How still is all!—only the old clock keeps
Its life-like beat upon the pulse of time—
Time, that itself shall stop.

Yes, Winnie came.
Ruth knew her, and with life like taper flame
Just flickering, knew her; held her hand, soft
pressed,

To keep her near; talked wildly; gently chid,
Took (long refused) the drink as she was bid;
As soothed to silence with a childlike rhyme,
She listened, smiled, and dropped to quiet rest.
That sleep, though short, was good. With what
devotion

Tender, as if the feeblest infant there
Lay captive to her charge, her love, her care,
Sat Winnie by that bed. All stilled emotion,
Like whispered prayer, seemed present in that
room.

Then like a ray, a flicker, through the gloom,
The life-lamp shot up, hour by hour, more clear;
But ever was the cry, "Is Winnie near?"
And then, ere long, in Winnie's eyes a light
Shone, and her cheeks grew fire.

" You are not well?"
Cried Graye. " Poor girl!"

" I will go home to-night,"
Calmly she said. " But, oh, Sir, if you tell—
Say I'll come back."

Graye kissed her fevered brow.
" Thank you, brave lass, I'll take the fever now!
Winnie, you shall not die! God wants you here,
To make some wrong things right, some dark
things clear."

Winnie looked up; perhaps sudden sense of pain;
Perhaps 'twas too much—she did not speak again.
Just then a knock—

" Farmer, you do us wrong
To keep our dearest child away so long,"
Cried Sandford, with his wife.

" Is the night fine?"
Said Graye, confused. " Best take this cloak of mine,
To keep her warm?"

" 'Tis warm enough, you know?
We hope she's done her part? 'tis time to go.
Come, Winnie, girl, the night is summer mild.
Come, Grace."

But Grace was sobbing o'er her child.

THE WEDDING.

MORE than another year. The autumn, glowing,
Lay like a golden sunset on the woods,
Where oft the hunter's hillside clarion blowing
Sent cheery echoes down the solitudes.

The hare, disturbed, uplifts her pendant ears;
The pheasant, with a rush, the coppice clears.
Hark ! hark ! that well-known voice, old "Marks-
man's" bay !

He's found ! Hounds, hunters, all, away, away !
See where the dew-tipped turf now rises dark,
By speedy horse-hoofs pressed in Melbrun Park ;
Soon Melbrun Park, and woods, left far behind,
The distant music scatters down the wind.
Who rideth boldly often rideth well—
Few Everard could in horsemanship excel.
A good youth and a gallant. Far and near
His name in every village raised a cheer.
The "Sculler's match" he'd won upon the
Teign ;
True, 'twas disputed ; so he rowed again—
Again victorious. On Combe Lawn he lowered
Seven wickets—seven?—but only six were scored.
On Combe full oft a gusty wind prevails ;
The wind, and not the bowler, took the bails.
In sports athletic, on the village lees,
The shouting rustics saw him lift with ease
Three hundred pounds ! then, by a sudden twist,
He snapped a bar, thick almost as his wrist.
The metal was prepared—three parts sawn through,
But this the astonished peasants never knew.
The closing act it was, burlesque, ideal :
His other feats were all authentic, real.

Some pages back we glanced at an event
Which might come off—"A Ladies' Tournament."

Ladies, like knights, may lances raise too high;
E'en fools can swerve, and put such weapons by—
As savage chiefs, with feathery shields, deride
The warrior's skill, and glance his darts aside.
But Clive and Clare, sweet girls, took better aim,
And tilted at the heart. Ah, where's the blame?
If men have hearts, why may not belles essay
To make them theirs, and conquer whilst 'tis day?
Night comes too quickly, and the autumntide;
And every woman once has wished to be a bride.
So Everard fell, scarcely regretful, he
Might wish a little longer to be free—
At balls and “archerries” still a welcome meet,
Where soft blue eyes, and black, his own might
greet.
Youth, health, high courage, when not overbold,
The lustre have, if not the ring, of gold.

Sweet Mary Clare! 'tis time she takes her place,
And glides before us with her pleasant face.
Lovely and loving—pure unconsciousness,
Scarce knowing how, won gentle Everard;
His heart, entangled in a golden tress,
Was fettered fast; it did not struggle hard.
Unclasped, sweet Mary's hat blew off one day,
And floating, fluttered down to Everard's feet.
Her locks, like golden sunbeams, streamed away;
Alas! for Everard there was no retreat.
She smiled, and blushed, and blushed as still she
smiled:
He almost blushed himself; till, quite beguiled,

He must replace the hat—adjust it, too;
'Twas a coquettish little hat, he knew:
So was he bound by hours to Mary's side,
And when he said sweet things, her bashful eyes
replied.
The Clive knew all was lost, as, all in vain,
Her syren songs that night she sung again, again.

When Everard told his father whom he loved,
"My boy, your choice," he answered, "is ap-
proved."

His mother rose as Mary entered, drew
Her close, and said, "I've now a daughter, too!"
Mary, abashed, looked down; then softly sighed,
"Dear Everard might have won a worthier
bride."

O, love and youth, I sang of you of yore,
When song around you cast her sweet glamour;
Again I sing, when through a golden haze,
A lawnlike future slopes to summer days.
O, love, be true; with potent spells repeal
Old hates, and wrongs, and make this compact
real.

The year is dying; on the cherry still,
The red leaf hovers, dancing as it will;
The limes look bare, with half their verdure gone,
Brown is the ash, but browner still the thorn.
The birch drops gold, amidst her falling leaves,
And every poplar for lost Phaeton grieves;

The redwing comes; from hedgerows in each lane,
Small clouds of sparrows rise, and drop, and rise
again.

The village stirs; within the gray church tower
The bells, impatient, wait the coming hour.
But who is this? What! Farmer Graye alive!
And by his looks he seems again to thrive.
He did not take the fever, no, not *he*—
From Winnie's lips, so all the lads agree—
“Ne'er had the chance.” Yet, true his prophecy,
“Thank Heaven!” they cried, “sweet Winnie did
not die.”
'Twas a hard time. Death came to her, and played
With her soft hair, yet lingered, as afraid
To strike; and as her eyes unclosed their blue,
And her soft bosom heaved, he pitied, and withdrew.
Yet, father, mother—both had gone; they died
A few months since, and now rest side by side.
And Graye and Ruth took Winnie to their home,
To be their child, till one lost child should come.
“'Twill be no match,” said Graye, “his word
would stand,
For Harry was not worthy Winnie's hand.”
Pale, very pale; in figure slight, yet tall,
For this occasion all in white arrayed,
And in the light of her soft eyes, a shade;
Though gay the scene around, and festive all,
A shadow of past memories—a regret,
Softened by dreams of hopes that had not come,
as yet.

Yes, this was Winnie Sandford, calm—refined;
A peasant's child, indeed, but something more.
She followed a bright troop of girls, who bore
Small baskets filled with flowers, to scatter o'er
The bride's glad path when she from church re-
turned.

Yet Winnie had her chosen part to play,
Leading an orphan child, both poor and blind;
A little wayward thing, whose heart had yearned
To see the bride pass by in her array;
For once that child saw Mary, when she stood
In the dim haze of his fast closing sight,
And pitied him. It was—she seemed so good—
As though an angel came, and looked on him at
night.

And Winnie loved him; ever sought to be
A second sight to one, whose dark eyes could not
see.

But hark! the bells! delay no longer biding,
As down the aisle the bridegroom leads his
bride,
O'er his new home for evermore presiding,
To dwell in weal or sorrow by his side.

Now to the Grange! ere long a chariot waits,
'Neath trees whose arching boughs recal the dawn,
To bear them forth through old ancestral gates,
Into a world which seems a flower-strewn lawn.
From tower and spire the banners proud declare,
In scutcheoned blazonry, "Melbrun and Clare.

And now, around the Grange, the village all,
Await the rustic feast, soon followed by the ball.
Not there went Winnie; but the orphan child
Goes with her back to Graye's; and there beguiled
By kindest words, that like soft music made
A vocal sunshine in his house of shade.
She led him home by Holden Wood, and dell;
He asked about the stars: "Would Winnie say
What they were like? He could remember well
A little lamp, that by his mother's side,
Grew less and less, and went out when she died.
Would the stars die? Were they far off—a mile?
Or did they join at dawn to make the day?
What lit them up?" Then Winnie said, "God's
smile,
That makes all pure things beautiful above.
They are, perhaps, as the dear Lord relates,
The many mansions in his Father's house,
That are reserved for those whom he doth love."
"Doth he love children? No! or I should see."
But Winnie bent her down to kiss his cheek;
'Twas wet with tears. "Dear child! Heaven's
golden gates
To all stand open who to enter seek,
And all who suffer, trustful, and resigned,
Are angels, and though sightless, are not blind."

THE RETURN.

"Hark! what was that? a step!" the orphan said.
"I nothing hear," said Winnie. "You are afraid."

"There—there!"

"The brook amidst the rushes brown,
And now—a sheep's bell tinkles from the down."

"A step! we're followed!"

Silent Winnie stood,
And listened—" 'Tis the night hawk in the wood.
Come, Freddy, we have turned into the lane;
Yes, here's the cottage."

"Will you come again
To-morrow—next day?"

"Kiss me—yes, I'll try.
Here's Martha, take her hand—good-bye, good-bye."
Winnie moved quickly, almost ran—not quite;
"A step! a step! the little child was right."
Now her heart fluttered, like a bird's when caught.
She was not caught; each foot of ground she knew;
But surely she was followed, so she flew,
Down through a footway Graye had newly made,
Down to the farm; here, 'neath an old elm's shade
She stood and listened, with her lips apart,
Yet safe—one hand upon her throbbing heart.

"O Winnie! in what haste from me you fled!
I knew that step, though on the turf its tread
Was not so bounding as in days gone by;
I should have known it on my grave, if dead!
Dead! There are some folks, Winnie, never die!
Yes, I am *here*. It must be now three years
Since first I left my country, *you*, and all.
O what a time of tumult, trial, and tears!
I would not, could I one brief hour recal.

I have been sorely tempted. Guiltless? No!
Look on me, there are shadows on my brow
Night cannot deepen. To my fall I rushed;
Passions pursued me—with high courage flushed,
Like a wild horse I plunged into the tide,
Strove to outswim the torrents rolling wide.
I drifted to a strand, where reckless men
And reckless women—start not!—Not till then
Learnt I what women could be. With them, their god,
Their altars—mine! Their deserts wild I trod:
Aye, little gold I found, but licence rife,
And gamesters there with loaded dice, who played,
And many a life was in that game betrayed,
And many a soul was staked upon a life.
Who drove me forth? They told me *he* was dead:
I thought so—”

Winnie shuddering, backward drew.
“Winnie, you know it was my love for you
That proved my ruin!”

Winnie would have fled.
She who till then had found her sweetest task,
Through months of doubt, of sorrow, of despair,
Devoted, loving, girl-like, to have thrown
Her arms around him, claimed him as her own—
Long lost—but *now*—

“Your father,” faltering fell
The words—“Your father lives. Why do you ask?
Your mother—”

“Aye, the fever. I have heard
That she survives; for *Winnie* nursed her well.
She’s a good woman—kind. A rumour stirred

Just three months since, that said my father died;
So I returned, and found that rumour lied.
I've taken all he should have left me." "How?"
Cried Winnie, breathless. "Yes, too soon you'll
know!"

A stamp, a slip of paper, and a name:
My own, or soon what should be—where's the
blame?

I tell you, that with reckless men I've run
My course. And women? Winnie, what if *one*
Be in the village, would it give *you* pain?
Well, I am going."

"Going?" Winnie cried.
But maiden love was awed by maiden pride.
She put her hands before her face. Again,
"Going!" she said.

Then Harry seized her wrist
To part her hands, to kiss her, but he missed
His aim; and baffled, cried—

"Ah, when I loved
It was as fire; I could not wait—I fled.
The very roaring of the winds reproved
All stint, all stay."

"No love, indeed, was there,"
Said Winnie. "Little woman! do you dare
To say so? Be my friend, in briefest time,
Wherefore, you'll know. My deed brooks no
delay;
Let not my name be branded for a crime.
He will not find me?"

"Who is that?" said Graye,

Opening the door, for he heard voices. Gone
Was Harry—only Winnie *there*, alone,
In darkness; yet an echo—some stray tone,
As of past years, when from her child in youth
Came a small voice—fell on the ears of Ruth.
Rousing—she had been dozing in her chair—
She cried, “I dreamed of Harry—who was there?”
“No one,” said Graye; “’twas fancy—Winnie,
love.

Just read the prayer, ’tis late.”

She did not move.

“Sit down, your walk has tired you—here’s the
book.”

Then Winnie, slowly moving to his side,
Hoarsely exclaimed—

“Read to us, tell us all,
What once He bore who for his loved ones died.”
“What is it?” answered Graye. “You look as
dazed
As if a wraith—”

She whispered, “He appeared!
All suddenly—as suddenly is gone!
But O! so changed!”

“My son!” said Graye, amazed.
“Not come to us? I’ll fetch him. Ah, I feared—”
He stopped. “O, he is lost! Was he *alone*?
My boy—my boy! And he so near has been!”
“Sure he’ll come back,” his mother said, “and
tell
Of all the wondrous things that he has seen.”
Winnie spoke not; poor Ruth to weeping fell;

Graye stood as stone, hard fixed, and hard his
look,
The prayer-book on the bench—his knuckle on the
book.

THE FORGER.

The next day it was rumoured far and wide
That Harry had been seen—yet few believed;
(It might be the informant was deceived);
So, in due course, at length that rumour died.

But Graye, to whom poor Winnie had told all,
Scarce stirred abroad, but silent in his chair
Sat helpless. 'Twas as though he waited there
The sentence that should smite him, home and
all.

Too soon it came; for, as with troubled eyes,
He watched the gray light of the autumn skies,
Quick to the door, a messenger! He tore
The packet open—from his bankers. "They
Had paid a cheque, a great sum on him, more
Than he had credit for. Best no delay,
But see them, and arrange."

"I will not pay
The cheque—'tis forged!" said Graye, as up he
sprang;
"I'll not be ruined thus!" Then poor Ruth clang
Around him, and implored.

"Speak, Winnie, speak!
I'll go by you." Then Winnie's pallid cheek

Lit up, and cleared the mists which seemed to fill
Her eyes. "O, save him, if within your power;
he will

Never return again—no, never more!"

"My son!—what, never? Worse may yet befall;

I should have thought of this—aye, long before.

What, must I sell my cottage, stacks, my all?

Then not enough, perhaps?—but I must go."

He seized his hat, his stick. "At once I'll know

How far this ruin tends. I hear a sound

Of shouts and laughter, jeers triumphant round.

Ah, Winnie, girl, he's crushed you—*you!* I'm wild,
And if I pay it, I will curse him—"

"No!

Best curse me, rather—send me forth; forego

This cruel threat, *we* all have loved him so.

Father, I kneel; O, do not curse your child."

Graye rushed into the air—away, away,

Nor came he back till late into the day,

Calmer, resigned. "'Tis all arranged," he said;

"The bankers have been kind, and time will give.

The cottage, stacks, and more I have beside,

They take; but I will pay them, if I live!

Yes, if I live!" Not many months he lives;

No more, "That's stern old Graye; how well he
thrives,"

But a poor broken man—much changed and bent;
Spiritless, calm, a little child might lead;

At least, a child-like thing, that often leant

Her head against his shoulder—sweet, indeed—

And, perhaps, in silence sometimes weeping there,

Loving him, looking with her pale blue eyes
On him as one who'd raised her from despair,
And gave life, wealth, his all, as sacrifice!
Oft would he sit at eventide each day,
And Winnie murmured in the twilight dim
Some melody or psalm, though not alway
She sang it through, as silently a shade
In her deep eyes the mournful past betrayed,
And her voice faltered.

“ You’re in fault, my bird;
The linnets do not miss a single word,
Nor nightingales.”

“ O, no,” said Winnie; “ they
Draw from no hidden lore their wondrous lay;
An untaught song of joy. My foolish rhymes,
Though tuned to echoes dear of olden times,
May, like an harp string, with the overstrain,
No sound like music ever yield again.”

* * * * *

One evening sat they in the farmhouse porch,
Watching the clouds. The swallows flitted round,
Fearless of Graye, as though a friend they’d found.
On the blue hills, afar, like glimmering torch,
A gleam shot, then went out as suddenly,
And pall-like hung the darkness in the sky.
“ See! ’tis the summer lightning, Winnie, love—
How quickly it has clouded. High above
The vapours spread into dark bands, as when
Armies are charging; what a harvest then!
And now gigantic reapers, ten or more,
Flash their red sickles through the darkened mass,
Till down in waves of reddening fire it goes.

High in the south, a rampart red as brass
Looms, and a lurid light its shadow throws
Along the sky; and now—”

“‘Tis nearly o’er,”

Said Winnie. “See how soft a light prevails.
And the pale twilight glimmers more and more.
Lovingly, tenderly, night comes up the vales,
Crowned with her crescent moon, as holy things,
For all her shadows slept beneath her wings.
There was no thunder!”

“No,” said Graye. “How still
The storm has passed”—he stopped—

“Winnie, I’m ill!
I faint! Good-bye—yes, kiss me.”
His brow she pressed,
Wonderingly—“Good night.” No answer—but a
smile;
Other reply was kept for other while;
Far off—in other worlds. He was at rest!

CONCLUSION.

Graye dead! His widow did the squire present
To an almshouse; there, with ample means and
board,
This she accepted with a sweet content,
For never high her humble wishes soared.
What yet remained, to Winnie was conveyed,
Whom Graye (his wife deceased) his heir had
made.
Small was the annual sum—enough—no more,

Than might keep want, life's gaunt wolf, from the door.

The Squire resumed the farm. But Winnie bent Lowly before the storm, in silence, too.

It seemed on earth she had no more content, Yet could not leave it—wished she, aye, to go.

"Whom the gods love die young." Not always so; Some wend a lengthened pilgrimage of woe.

A mission, from whose sorrows there exhales

A sweetness, as whene'er midst doubt prevails

A glorious faith like hers, who gently cried—

"Hadst thou been here, my brother had not died!"

At the old house 'twas Winnie's wish to stay Till the new tenant came—and so, one day As she sat sad and watchful, it befell, Footsteps approached the doorway, and she heard Kind women's voices, and in soft-breathed word, Her name. She trembled, yet the voice knew well: 'Twas Mary Melbrun's, the young wife's. "I come, Winnie—to ask you to my husband's home; There dwell with us. At least awhile abide, Till life's dark waves run with a smoother tide. Dearly we love you. Come; I know too well I have no power to plead, nor would compel Your will. Poor girl!" (for Winnie wept)—"not thus Would grieve you, Winnie; yet, oh, live with us, And from the wrongs you've suffered find repose. Oft the crushed heart may, like the crumpled rose, In warmth, in love, in sunlight, yet resume Its sweetness, beauty, like a second bloom."

“Oh, no, I thank you; I have duties yet—
My poor blind orphan child can I forget?”
“Blind! He’s restored, and came home yesterday;
The film removed—can partly see, they say.
List, Winnie. Yes, ‘tis Martha, Freddy, near.”
Then was a small voice heard: “Is Winnie here?”
And a child entered, partly bandaged. He
“Had come to show ‘dear Winnie’ he could see.”
Winnie! but which was Winnie? As one amazed,
On her he looked, and then on Mary gazed—
Mary, in bloom of love and loveliness;
Winnie, so worn in mind and heart’s distress.
He paused. On Winnie’s lips his murmured name
Died ere ‘twas uttered. Could she be the same,
Whom he had loved—so beautiful, so kind?
Perhaps it were better far he still were blind.
He paused, then moved to Mary, as he cried,
Kissing her hand and clinging to her side,
“You are so beautiful; with you I’ll go;
You must be Winnie—I will love you so.”
Mary put by the child. She saw the light
Pass out of Winnie’s face, a shadow slight,
The first she’d ever seen. Then sweet and low
Spoke Winnie: “All things gather round me now
So dark; no little flicker anywhere.
I wonder that I live. Yet I will bear
What is my lot; the end comes very slow.
Ah, Freddy, I am Winnie; kiss me; yet
Once more—you are so young! Yes, yes; forget
How Winnie loved you—perhaps you’ll never
know.”

She turned to Mary. " May I change my mind,
And come to-morrow for a little while—
A little while? You are so good, so kind,
My heart will beat the quicker 'neath your smile.
Yes, yes, to-morrow for a little while?"

My tale were well-nigh done; what matter, more?
Yet much lies in a life; though, as before,
The same still forms pass down to the same shore.
Face like to face, as flower to flower, appears
Upon the flower the dew, upon the face the tears.
Gray forms wave through a haze as present seem,
The long-departed dear ones in a dream;
A song, a kiss, hands pressed, then something nigh,
Wind-like, that stirs a dreary tapestry,
The interwoven hopes of days gone by.
So the old shadows move from the old walls,
And others come, like unto those that go—
Like, not the same—and now a silence falls;
And now rise numerous voices, sounds of woe,
In battle spent, in combats void and vain;
For things fought out that still are fought for—
aye, again!

We stand beside a shore where all around
A gray mist lies, and waves without a sound;
And wrecks float by, like kingdoms that have been,
And kings whose names, like Demogorgon, made
Nought down the sweeping infinite but shade.
And by and bye we see a thing forlorn,
A something like a sea-bewildered bird
(Its scared voice in the night a moment heard),

That glides into the dark—is seen no more—
And still the spectral waves rise, fall, upon the
shore.

Winnie with Mary went, the orphan too;
But though he lived with Winnie, well she knew
His little heart was absent: oft he'd stray
In garden paths till Mary came that way.
She was to him as to one lost, when clears
A guiding star its sudden drifting cloud,
And floats in a blue sea, until a shroud
Of vapour come again, with rain like tears.

And Winnie lived as one beneath a spell.
The purple rooms, the deer-trod slopes around,
The chequered lights that glanced o'er hill and dell,
And still retreats, where fancy loved to dwell;
And music's spells, as household doves drew
round,
With their melodious wings, to sweep the chords or
sound.
All seemed a charmed indolence that bound
Her senses and her soul, until at last
She rose and cleared her sight, and the illusion
passed.
The world! the world! She must go forth to bear
Her cross in trial, temptation, everywhere!
To make her creed, her faith to God, take part
With that deep love she cherished in her heart!
Long Mary pleaded—gently, but in vain;
Soon Winnie stood beside the bed of pain,

With ministering hand and voice, creating
Hopes that till then had perished in the waiting.
As oft again, when grief and sin combined,
Shook the last sands of some distempered mind,
She kissed the fevered brow; the sufferer woke
From his dark, perilous sleep; bright comfort spoke,
And to his penitent soul revealed, though far,
Heaven's golden gates, that stood for him, ajar!

A battle field! the smoke-rifts scarcely flown;
See, midst the dying, woman stands alone!
The red cross o'er her heart, on her pale brow
Sorrow and suffering; yet, how lovely now!
A sweet, yet firm resolve, to aid, to save;
That to her face a saint-like beauty gave.

A gun dismounted close at hand; beside her
A horse, stiff, cold, stretched o'er his lifeless rider;
A little brook not far, that scarce ran clear;
Of what? No matter; blood enough was near.
There, at her feet, lay one—oh, once, how dear!
On her he fixed his eyes, now strangely fond,
Then stared at the red sky that lowered beyond.
Maimed was he, cruelly. Winnie damped his
brow,
Then gently sought to raise him; to his lips
To lift her cruise ere death's dark shades eclipse
All sense. Alas! her poor strength failed her
now.
“Winnie! *you* here?—or some blessed spirit nigh?
O God, they come!” Then on his arm upraised,

“The foe, the foe return!” Then Winnie gazed,
Saw a dark cloud of battle, through whose gloom
And whirlwind rush, shone steed, and steel, and
plume.

“The foe!” cried Harry Graye; “pursuit is o'er.
Back to the field they come, once more—once more!
They'll crush you—crush us both. O, Winnie, fly!
There yet is time—and leave me here to die!”

“To die?” she said—a moment's weakness cast
Its pallor. With clasped hands she cried, “At last,
The end! What then? 'Tis woman's battle field,
Where suffering pleads, *there* must she never yield!”

“They come!—they're here!”

She turned with sudden glance;
From a dead Uhlan's hand she snatched a lance;
Tied her white kerchief; waved it as she stood,
Angel of Mercy on that field of blood!

The squadron came—their weapons glittered nigh.
Sudden they wheeled, as thrilled a startled cry,
“To the right!” A lane was made as they swept
clear,

And down their ranks there ran a noble cheer.
They're gone, they're gone—the frightful dream was
true!

Winnie like statue stood—as silent, too.
Slowly the staff sank noiseless to the ground;
Night's shadows fell—a few faint watchlights far,
Flickered; and o'er the hills one pale, lone star
Glimmered at times. Each moan was hushed and
sound.

A breath came. Like a smitten bird's white wing

Fluttered a plume. Two foes, who side by side
For hours had lain, rose, grappled, dropped, and
died.

Ah, never stirred *that* wounded man again,
But stared with sightless eyes *on her* in vain;—
And Winnie stood alone 'midst hundreds of the
slain !

GEMS.

A few wild magic notes of song,
Some hidden spells may waken;
But, ah ! such spells they last not long,
Like blossoms when the breeze is strong,
They fall, too rudely shaken.

An honest life is more than fame,
The soul's best gains are surest;
No mould can rust, no foe can claim,
'Mid grief, 'mid poverty, the same—
Unchanged, our wealth securest !

The wall-flower in the turret rift
(No stain from earth can smutch it),
Through storm it blossoms, and is left
Too poor, and yet too rich, a gift
For hands profane to touch it.

THE DIVORCED.

A voice he heard, so sweet and low,
That through the mist of years,
Brought memories back of long ago,
That dashed his eyes with tears.

Yes, suddenly those accents close
Around his desolate heart,
Like sea-worn birds that seek repose
A moment, and depart.

“Ah, couldst thou wear thy mother’s smile,
And sing thy mother’s song,
And deem thy witcheries could beguile
Her unforgiven wrong?”

The lay was o’er—it went like strain
In dreams of music heard;
Yet, as it ceased, again, again
The charmed silence stirred!

A step upon his ears there fell
Like *hers*, in olden time—
A voice, whose music seemed the spell
That made his youth sublime.

A murmur—"Father, yes, I bring
My mother's latest sigh:
A widowed, fragile, passing thing,
To whom 'twas life to die.

"She bade me, should I ever chance
To meet thee far or near,
To sing that song of 'Old Romance,'
Which once thou heldst so dear.

"To bear thee—ah, 'twas as she died!—
Her love, from thee ne'er riven,
To pray thee, bending by thy side,
'To say, *She* was forgiven!'"

CHARLES DICKENS.

HARK! through yon wooded vale, the tolling bell—
See, half-mast high the flags on Medway's river—
He's gone—how quickly gone—whose fame shall
dwell

In gentle English homes and hearts for ever!
Those lips are mute, whose utterance, eloquent,
The right, the true, the just, so bravely told—
The hand which down the chords of feeling sent
Once sweetest music—now, is stilled and cold.

Ah, if the beings whom the mind creates
With new-born spells from night and gloom return,
What train of shadowy pilgrims now awaits,
To pay true homage at the master's urn?
Dear, gentle Nelly—yes, for thee is found,
For all like thee, fair child, sweet homes of rest;
And heart-strings, exquisitely tuned, shall sound
With echoes sent from lips best loved, and blest.

Pale Oliver, and Paul, that wondrous boy,
And all to whom when dying wild waves say
Unspoken things—a soft, mysterious joy,
Like spirit-tones, shall waft their souls away.
But other forms the funeral train compose—
Dark, tragic; weird, 'tis Lady Dedlock nears;
And now, like light o'er forms grotesque, there
glows
A sunny laughter amidst smiles and tears.

Farewell, farewell, thy latest tale untold,
A fragment flung on Life's retreating sea,
A "Mystery," Death forbade thee to unfold—
Yet Death's own secret is now solved by thee.
So, on thy bier we place thy coronet,
Nature's true noble; yes, a wreath entwined
With pearl-like flowers, and for its gems we set
Thy country's tears all lovingly enshrined.

A G E.

THEN is there no return to youth and love?

 Ah! why such vain regret?

"Tis as the curtain falls alone we prove

 Who are the victors, yet.

Life's history is not youth, manhood, decay,

 But the crowned deeds of years;

Self-conquest, when the last drum rolls away,

 And the last smoke-rift clears.

High spirits and fresh health may bear us on,

 Like war steeds, to the van;

But not till *there* the fight is waged or won—

 There only man proves man.

And age is robed with honour, and it wears

 A cherished wreath of fame,

When on its well-worn garments there appears

 No stain its years to shame.

THE DARK RIVER.

DARK river, how swiftly, serenely along
You glide 'mid yon islets of trees,
As each ripple were tuned to some faint under-song,
Or to murmurs of home-going bees.

The mill-wheel drones on, dripping fast in the shade,
The blue pike lies poised by the wall,
And the trout's gleam of silver, a moment displayed,
Has flashed 'gainst the near waterfall.

The mists slowly rise; o'er the stream whirl the swallows;
There's a desolate stir 'midst the reeds;
A ripple just shakes the broad flags on the shallows,
The minnows shoot under the reeds.

O, stream, gliding ever! Fair earth and blue ocean!
O spells of the twilight!—youth's dear visions too;
The delusion, why teach through the heart's best emotion
That the beautiful's only the good and the true?

THE RED CROSS STAR.

Two hosts are marching to the fight,
Beneath an Eastern sky;
Apart, steel clad, a lonely knight,
Awaits the "onset" cry.

His lance in rest, his left arm bore
A sash of sable hue,
And on his heart a tress he wore—
It was of sable, too.

Yes, there are moments that contain
The thoughts of years compressed;
He bowed him to his charger's mane,
He said, "To die, 'twere best.

She is no more—Estelle, the star
To my life's morning given,
When I rode down the storm of war,
My sign, my cross, my heaven!"

He charged—the battle wildly rose,
The crescents gleamed o'erhead.
He fought—by heaps of Moslem foes
The gallant knight lay dead.

Yet on his brow there played a light—
Clear, starry, undefiled—
As if on his brave spirit's flight
Looked down his angel mild;

As if some breath had stolen around,
To lift his fallen plume,
Amid the strife, a sweet low sound,
That said, “Belovèd, come!”

O, love, to Heaven translated, never
Forgets its mission just;
The same deep spells sublimed for ever,
The same, with nobler trust.

THE GIRL TO HER BIRD.

O, SOUTHERN cloud, with silvery rain,
I saw ye rise—ye did not bring
My longed-for promise of the spring,
My gentle swallow back again.

When beaten by the storm he fell,
Last summer, 'gainst my casement high,
I took him in, I nursed him well;
I kissed him softly, lest he die.

Fed from my hand how tame he grew;
Then fondly hiding he would nest
Anear my heart, as well he knew,
Its pulses warm, would soothe his rest;

Then wake, and thank me in his way—
A twitter fond, like whisper bland,
A promise to return some day,
Ere summer roses decked the land.

The red rose blooms; he is not here,
Though his companions fill the sky,
Across the water-lilied mere
They skim and wheel, and joyous fly.

I see his faintly fluttering wings,
Yet will he tempt the stormy sea?
He thinks of me—he homeward springs,
He's lost! the waves roll wild and free!

All loved things die; yet they who love,
Must they not die as well? Ah, me,
They live too long, who live to prove
How lone a life unloved can be!

WINTER THOUGHTS FOR THE
 SUMMER OF 1871.

PRUSSIA's eagle soars triumphant, but the Gaul lies
 grimly waiting,
 Like a tiger, for a season, with its teeth clenched
 fast and strong;
 But the roses all are blooming, and each wild bird
 seems relating
 A sweet music to the woodlands, could we listen
 to its song.

To a bird's song shall we listen? or thank God for
 summer's brightness,
 Or for anything that's common? No, the cost
 the value gives;
 Though that cost were human suffering, like the
 ball-room wreath of lightness,
 That exhaled to her who wrought it, death and
 poison from its leaves.

Hold! no Sunday trading, brothers. Certes, we're
 a pious nation;
 If we sell the Sabbath salmon,* we the poor
 man's cresses seize;

* See the daily papers of 1871, where the police reports
 record that it is lawful to hawk salmon, but not water cresses,
 on a Sunday.

And ye soulless grooms and coachmen, ye must
 ply your avocations,
To and fro, and all the church time, whilst your
 ladies pray at ease.

But the alleys! O, the alleys! and upstairs, the
 dismal garret,
Where the hunted street boy hideth, though he
 vows to steal no more,
As the fever and the famine claim his ebb of life to
 share it,
And his dying hand unclasping, rolls a half-
 penny on the floor.

Truly we're a noble nation, but with tradelike pre-
 dilections;
Send our seamen out in rotten ships* whilst
 “Lloyd's” the assurance pays.
In our parks if ere a Ranter lecture grimly on our
 fictions—
Tis the mud-eel from the bottom that doth only
 bubbles raise.

Fools! must we make war and battle just to save
 the old tradition?
And like maddened bulls rush wildly, crashing
 on each other's brains,

* See Reports of Trials in *Times*, &c., 1871.

Undefied and uninvited? Ah! has Peace no sacred mission?

And for Christian homes and uses, is it Christ or Moloch reigns?

Shame, shame to all our progress, to our teachers, to our teaching!

Forging plates one time for *Merrimacs*, then shots for *Monitors*!

Can our great age yield no fruitage, but the pride of over-reaching

Weaker men, or men less wicked, whom our arrogance abhors?

Will this bring a millennium? this a brotherhood, uprising,

Teach peace to heathen nations, that all good-will may abound?

O, spirit of Ithuriel, strike, with truth-spear, exorcising

The fiend from all the ugly, dark hypocrisies around.

THE DYING CHILD.
—

BREATHE softly, summer wind, where Jessie's lying,
Soft on our darling's forehead—she is dying!
O, summer wind, as ever loved and loving,
Her gentle tresses to thy whispers moving.
She bound her brows with one bright braid of
flowers—
Bright braid, 'tis snapped! the withered links are
ours.

O, breath of summer, 'neath the twilight blowing,
When starlight comes—and yet the day is glowing—
Wilt thou not waft her to celestial gardens,
Before the pure snow of her innocent heart
Had ta'en of this dark world or taint or part?
Or rests she guarded now by heavenly wardens;
A stillness round, like faint-heard melodies,
A darkness, starry, through her closed eyes,
Her meek hands crossed, her meeker soul at rest,
Till God's own dawn bring day to all his blessed!

Breathe softly, summer wind, on brow and tresses,
And gentle be thy kiss on such a lip as Jessie's.

O GIVE ME ONE DEAR SMILE
AGAIN.

SONG.

O GIVE me one dear smile again,
And all the past shall be
Forgotten, like some mournful strain
That fades upon the sea:

That fades; yet as each dying song
Has softening echoes too,
So, Mary, still to thee belong
Some memories fond and true.

A look, a word of kind regret
That half atones for ill;
And when most willing to forget,
Compels me, love thee still.

Then give me one dear smile again,
And all the past shall be
Forgotten, like that mournful strain
That died upon the sea.

THE DARK-RED SAIL.

A BRETON LEGEND.

“O **DARK**-red sail, when may I see
 You stud yon line of blue?
 When will my love return to me,
 My sailor, stout and true?

“I heard the moaning waves last night—
 Upstarting, as in fear;
 My little child, in her affright,
 Cried, ‘Help me, mother dear!’

“All day I watch, all night I weep,
 I climb yon beacon’s stair;
 Mine eyes the far horizon sweep—
 No dark-red sail is there!”

Then out there stepped an aged crone,
 Where five gray pillars stood;
 So old she was, so spare and lone,
 As born before the Flood.

The dry grass stirred, the thistles shook,
 The dead leaves curled and rolled,
 Like pages of some wizard’s book,
 Turned over, red and gold.

Then shrill she spoke to that wee wife,
Whose tears fell fast and free:
" Why such a coil about a life?—
There's braver men than he!
" 'Tis three hours ere yon sun shall set;
We'll climb yon headland cliff;
I'll build a mound so high—ye yet
Shall see your red-sailed skiff.
" And be his bark above the wave,
Or 'neath the briny foam,
Oh, ye shall see your skipper brave,
Who loves so oft to roam."
With strength so rare, with stone on stone,
She reared a mound of beach—
Of beach by gales upheaved and strown—
How high that pile did reach!
Then, ere the sun had touched the waves,
She raised the wee wife up;
She saw the wealth in ocean caves,
Like gold things in a cup.
She saw the fleets upon the brine,
Like small gray specks of cloud;
She saw the monster things that twine
Round bones which ne'er had shroud.
All things the green sea steeps behind,
She saw. Ah! fears prevail,
As rise the tears her eyes to blind,
She saw no dark-red sail!

Oh, poor young thing, so sad and lone,
What shadows round her flit?
But as the last ray fell—ere flown,
A dark-red sail it lit!

The young wife turns, with joy and tears,
To bless that aged crone;
Gone! gone!—and lo! no mound appears,
But sea and headland lone!

That night the young wife calmly sleeps,
Some fairy seals her eyes;
Her little child beside her creeps,
Then wakes with sweet surprise.

“Oh, mother dear, your fears disarm;
My father comes—he’s here!
Around my neck he winds his arm,
Round yours, too, mother dear!”

“LIFE’s a passing vision.” See!
Is it a shadow of a tree
Or tower, that for a time abides?
Or lone sail on the far-off main?
‘Tis like a flying bird that glides
Swiftly away into the night,
Nor of its being, nor its flight,
See we, or know we, aught again.

MARCIA LIONI.

Yes, there, within those golden rooms,
 Where opened casements threw
 Their splendour out, and rich perfumes
 Rose to night's starry blue:

Where many a voice, like syren's lay,
 Breathed out its passionate spell;
 And, scattered round like sunlit spray,
 Bright laughter rose and fell.

The poet's gift of charmed breath
 Proclaimed the Present—all!
 None marked the shadowy hand of death
 Write darkly on the wall.

The wine shone ruddy red, divine,
 As held against the light,
 And women seemed to bless the wine—
 High Priestesses to-night!

Then entered One—dark-robed, alone,
 He seemed an unhid guest;
 On his broad hat a sapphire shone—
 Yet in Lioni's vest

His dagger. Near him, draped in shade,
 His wife, once wondrous fair;
 A light on her pale features played,
 And on her jewelled hair.

Narrow the gulf past love between
And present hatred lies.
They met—how ruinous had been
To *him*, her dark wild eyes!

Ghost of past beauty, and lost love,
Now, doubtingly, she stands;
Her child rushed in—to join, it strove,
Mother's and father's hands.

“O God! this is a bitter cup!”
She cried, “Away! *h*’s nigh!
Our child, our child! I yield her up;
He comes, Lioni—fly!”

She left. Lioni by the cloak
Count Sforza grasped: “Is’t thou?”
“I come at last!” Lioni spoke:
“Pay, then, what thou dost owe.”

“I pay it,” the seducer cried.
Lioni fell, and—slain:
“Away! to yellow Tiber’s tide
This corse! So—quits again!”

Both were great nobles in command,
Few dared their ire provoke.
Lioni’s was the heavier hand;
Sforza’s, the *swifter* stroke.

Young Marcia shrieked: “My little maid,
*Y*our mother waits? Take this:
Ask if the stain upon its blade
Be bluer blood than *h*is.”

She took it, and she kept that knife.
Ere long, the mother died;
But Marcia muttered, "Life for life;
I for my time can bide."

Beyond her years uprose that child,
The feud of blood well kept;
Men wondered Marcia never smiled—
Women—she never wept.

Ah, could it be her heart inspired
Hates that, like legion, came?
And eyes, so sweet, were ever fired
With light, that scathed like flame?

O perfect face, when in repose:
Lips, tinted love's own hue,
Fresh, as just kissed by a young rose,
At daybreak, in the dew.

"Buy off the spear, or bear it"—so
His wrongs the Saxon told.
Marcia ne'er bargained with her foe,
Her vengeance took no gold.

Twice failed she. Once, from bravo's hand
He struck the steel aside;
"Live, wretch, but say by whose command?"
"I'll die," the hireling cried.

Again, a cup was offered *him*,
But Sforza marked a brown
Bee, dead upon its sugared brim—
He dashed the goblet down.

She fled. Through the Abruzzi drear,
Like a wild eaglet, ranged;
There, waiting, watched; her only fear
Lest she die unavenged !

At length she heard Count Sforza lay
Ill, palsied, smitten down;
Then stole she forth her tiptoe way,
Through forest, mere, and town.

The palace gloomed in silence deep;
She mounted stair by stair.
The warders knew her; death and sleep,
They asked no pass-word there !

His room she entered; paused, then laid
A dagger by his side.
He knew it, knew her, 'twas the blade
By which her father died.

Then from a sconce a lamp she took,
Slowly; so near she drew,
He felt her breath, he felt the look,
Like a sword that pierced him through.

He strove to speak. She cried, "Retain
Thy reckoning for the dead !
His debt my father claims again"—
She fired the couch, and fled.

The palace blazed; she saw it fall,
With tower, and walls, and dome.
She cried, "Like blood, it reddens all
Thy face, thou guilty Rome!"

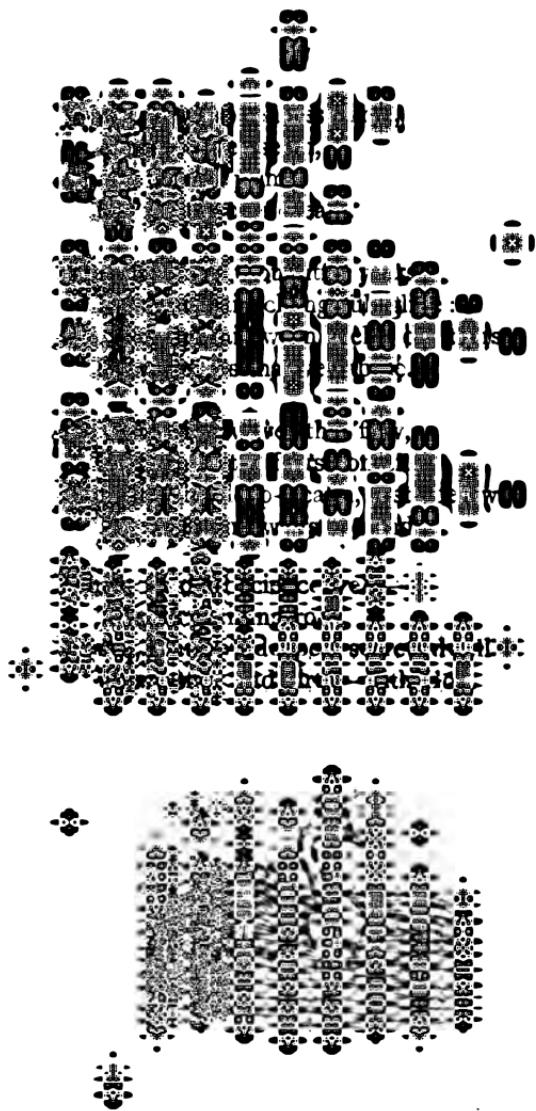
We boast of powers sublime,
 And in God's likeness stand—
 Lo! on the crumbling walls of time,
 Writes a mysterious hand.

Lone sign, what dost thou teach?
 Tell all! nor half, nor part—
 Wild as those footprints on the beach
 That once chilled Crusoe's heart.

'Mid old chaotic forms
 That lashed the surging main,
 Did war or elemental storms
 Pass over man in vain?

Or lived a giant race,
 As of diviner birth ;
 That from the "Sons of God" could trace
 The Anaks of the earth?

Where rest their mighty bones?
 Where be their histories read?
 Yet tempters live, that from these stones
 Again would make their bread.



TO

*

No poet's song, no sculptor's skill, could match
with thy desert;
No hand of mortal artist paint how beautiful thou
wert.
Bright as the angels are, like them, alone as worthy
love,
Through life's brief ways thy gentle steps did ever
heavenward move;
The very shadows of thy eyes fell like a soft, sweet
rain,
That promised, when the clouds had passed, the
flowers would bud again.
Thy name? I may not mention it—in softest
murmurs given;
Let it be wreathed with flowers, and in their
breath exhaled;
Whispered in longing ears, then float away to
heaven.
Thou art not dead! thou liv'st, like some sweet
saint, and veiled,
Whose face we may not scan through earthly mists
and tears,
Until the darkness of this world breaks up, and
morning clears.

* The leading idea of these verses is taken from the "Namen
Nennen sie Nicht" of Jean Paul Richter.

RONDEAU.

DID you ask me for that rose, Mary,
 With your look so arch and sly?
 I would give you fifty roses,
 Were I sure of one reply.
 I fear 'twas for the flower, Mary,
 It has so sweet a breath;
 And yet the fairest roses twine
 O'er your window, wreath in wreath.

You ask me for that rose, Mary?
 I've worn it but an hour;
 'Tis well, I think, to give and take,
 And you can spare a flower—
 Yes, one that's like yourself, Mary,
 All graceful, bending too;
 Half bud, half rose, before the day
 Has kissed away the dew.

You've asked me for that rose, Mary?
 Ah, is it such a prize?
 A blush is flitting on your cheeks,
 And downward bend your eyes.
 Yet, speak not lest you say, Mary,
 The rose bears all the spell;
 But take it, in its folded heart—
 There let the secret dwell.

PANDORA.

TRUTH amongst men made all things bright and fair,
 The balmy earth lay sunned in purple air;
 Through the clear skies her far-off mountains shone,
 Like fairy palaces of sunset cloud;
 The faint winds spoke in whispers, scarce aloud;
 And stormless seas lay hushed to one sweet mono-
 tone.'

At even-tide, young voices sent a hymn
 Through vine-clad vales of joy, and love, and
 pleasure;
 And the far echoes, floating, seemed to swim
 Out into darkness, whilst the hills grew dim,
 And all the stars rejoiced in one harmonious
 measure.

The nightingale—(O, beautiful indeed
 Was the wild myth that stirred her)—in her wood,
 Filled it with light; and on a trembling reed,
 The dragon-fly, all sheathed, exulting stood,
 That men might marvel how his plates infold,
 Azure and gules, and, in the sunlight, gold.
 No wolf the shepherd need to scare from fold,
 For these were halcyon days; and hand in hand,
 Men walked, as guests of the great gods, who gave
 Freely to them the lawny, pastured land,
 The corn ears, and the softly rippled wave,

That rolled them ambered waifs upon each golden strand.

Yet soon a change seemed coming: the deep azure Sent, through its pathless depths, a shadowy stain; The fitful wind, like mother's petted treasure, Sobbed, and was hushed again; And oft, as silence fell on lea and hill, The very hare, amid her sports, grew still. Great cities had arisen, and glittering fire Inspired new arts; and yet, alas! for man, This gift Promethean first aroused the ire Of Zeus, and all Olympus. Hence, began Infinite woes, for even now there ran Ominous, dark, a whisper, a weird tone, Like a sepulchral wind round some gray crom-lech stone.

Fire that in heaven had red-tipped bolts of Jove, And fed the stars, Prometheus from above Had stolen, and hidden in a hollow cane; Then given to man, as blessing or as bane. In vain all Caucasus, as the eagle's beak Tugged at the liver of the Titan, nods; Not long did Zeus for deep-stored vengeance seek. Olympus shook, lest men become as Gods. Then went a whisper forth, "We will endow An evil thing with gifts, a thing of woe." Woe, woe; ah, she is coming through the shade, As comes the first faint glimmer of the storm, That hath a fringe of sudden splendour made. Ah, yes, she comes; the beautiful in form. Hephaestus gave her life and motion; warm,

With all the graces, Venus hath bestowed
Such pleasure-giving eyes as never glowed
From mortal lids ; O yes, so sweet a smile,
But in their fatal depths, ah me, there lay
The fascination of the serpent's guile,
The gift of Hermes. Laughing on her way,
And scattering careless roses as she went,
She smiled, and ever smiled, on deadly mischief bent.
“ Receive her not, O brother, turn aside,
As from a second death,” the Titan* cried.
“ Receive her not, O Epimetheus!” Vain
The caution given : he saw her but to love.
Say to parched earth refuse the summer rain ;
Deny some love-sick bird to haunt the grove
Where all the leaves are trembling for her song,
Or mother, when a waking infant stirs,
And, smiling, lifts its arms : then, think not long
He'd fly Pandora, and a kiss like hers ;
Or, waking from some dream of loved ideal,
He would not close his arms to clasp the living Real.

* * * *

“ I weary, sweet,” she whispered. “ The night is
warm—
I weary; loose this casket from my arm ;
Repose we on this emeralled moss divine—
The Dryad trees look on us. See, here's wine ;
It sparkles, and the brooklet runs as bright
As flow the pleasures wherein we delight.”
And then she laughed, just as a rippling wave

* Prometheus.

That breaks in sunlight upon sands and spars,
And showed her pearly teeth midst rosy bars
Of lips so sweet—what kisses wild he gave!
“Drink—drink,” she murmured. “Art thou not my
slave?
And are not bonds like this — ” She wove her
arm
Around his neck—“delirious, white, and warm?
Drink, sweetest, drink; love gives to wine its glow.
How still is earth, how mute those stars above;
Sleep—I will wake thee to immortal love.”
He slept; her massy tresses o'er his brow
Made a cool night—how starless to him now!
To man, to all. Slowly her hand she slid
Down to a golden clasp, that prisoned, hid
A little host of woes. Slowly the lid
Opened half way; then stirred he, and he dreamed
A fearful spectre by him sat; it seemed
A something seated by him, white as bone,
Cold in the moonlight—cold. O, what a moan
Came from his desolate heart. A fearful glare
Streamed on the hills, and thunder throbbed and
rolled,
And died, and died, a never ending death.
Earth was aghast, as if she held her breath.
He saw, or thought he saw, like motes of gold,
Gleaming and gleaming, flitting things, and strange,
That as he gazed, each moment seemed to change;
And what at first was lovely, quickly grew
Hideous—unshaped, with pale and deadly hue.
These were the hates and sins, the Gods had stored

Within that fatal casket: She, the Abhorrea,
Was gone, or changed to stone, or passed in air.
Both, all—skies, rocks—a horrid aspect wear.
The maiden 'neath the stars who guileless went
To cull the herb of gold the sea beside,
Her own pure thoughts, her sweetest merriment,
Now started. On her garments' hem espied
A loathed, clinging thing, like toad or newt;
And as she cast it hence it seemed to change
To a sleek snake of opaline purple hues,
And in its eyes such fascination strange—
Full of entreaties, soft, to be caressed.
Ah, me! it was a waif of bitter fruit,
Cast up by waves of life's great passionate flow.
She hid it—why, she knew not—soft and low;
Kissed it with words, as to her heart it pressed;
It brought that gentle girl a wild unhallowed rest.
The lover gazing in the soft, clear eyes,
As ever wont, of her he truly loved,
Thought in their depths some stranger shadow
moved;
And she resenting, hot words came in sooth,
And either doubted of each other's truth.
A king enthroned, and crowned with ruddy gold,
Now saw a rival in the fealty
Of his brave captain—*he*, condemned to die,
Breathed poison, snake-like, with his death-pale lips,
Darkening a fame with ruinous eclipse—
The Queen's, who henceforth statue pale, apart,
Sat with her hand upon her breaking heart.
The devotee, who through the starlit air

Sent from his altar pure, to God his prayer,
Found (absent but a day) his shrine o'erthrown—
A human sacrifice—to gods of stone.
Hast seen a swallow, storm-dashed, that still clings
To the wet shroud, with clasping feet and wings;
Or wren, or wood thrush, when her nest is reft,
Scared—that in terror flies, comes back again,
And will not deem her little dead ones, slain?
So, Hope, of all that crew, for good was left,
Smilingly tearful. In her eyes lay dew
Of violets—*they* were exquisitely blue.
Now she would bide with man a little while—
A little joy, a little comfort gave;
Sometimes a sunny light, sometimes she threw
The star-gleam of a world beyond the grave.
Fitful, indeed, she was; she oft withdrew—
Vanishing, till adown life's darkest glade
An echo sweet came back that its small music made.
Then sometimes, seemingly, she would beguile
Sorrows with such an iris light of smile,
Men thought they saw some golden home in view.
Then came the shrieking rain; and then once more
Life's roses from the dreariest thickets blew.
Hope lingers still with us, and oft will lift
Our streaming eyes up through the stormiest rift
To noblest aims. Sometimes she points above
The trail a star when on its heavenward way
Has left. She often comes where poor men pray;
Lingers with children ever; favours love;
And earthly love, when pure, beyond all time
She lifts, until it grows a thing sublime.

IN MEMORIAM.

Not to-day, nor for a life yet, can we put off our sorrow;

For the grief in our hearts abiding lesseneth never with our years;

And our hearts are so dry and hopeless, that the weeping for the morrow

Must be stayed for a deeper grief that finds no help in tears.

'Tis a woe like a wind that waileth o'er a garden loved, forsaken,

When the trees are leafless, sapless, and the flowers lie dead around;

'Tis a harp-string out of tune by some rude hand sudden wakened,

When we miss the sense of music in the harshness of the sound.

Yet a footstep, yet a murmur, but the echo dies so lonely—

The echo like a heart-beat mocking still the sense of pain,

Not a footstep, not a murmur, not a whisper, not one, only

Will that sweet voice in its sweetness murmur back to us again.

Yes, gentle as a shadow down the deep blue heaven
that glideth,
Where the scattered star-dust moveth, kindling
round the angels' feet,
She returneth—ah, so gently—yes, with us she still
abideth,
Speaks a soft, unspoken music, touching memories
sad and sweet.

THE RIVER.

“WHITHER doth this river flow?”
Said a swallow, flying low,
Just above a tiny spring,
Welling 'neath a broken stone—
“Whither doth this river flow?
Downwards dashing it is thrown,
With a rainbow whirl of spray,
Mid those rocks and boulders gray,
Like a little silver snake;
Now 'tis gliding in the sun,
Now its chequered ripples run,
Creeping on through reed and brake.
Whither, whither doth it flow?
For I know it groweth ever
To be a mighty rushing river—
Waves that wash an unknown land,
I must cross them, surf and strand.”

“Whither doth this river go?”
Said a child who strove to float
On a brooklet midst the trees,
A tiny painted boat.
But a little wayward breeze,
Rustling through the willows’ shade,
Bore it from his hand away;
And he saw with sad surprise
All his tiny treasured ark
Vanish slowly from his eyes—
All his little treasured bark
With the sail his sister made
And its only flag of blue,
Vanish slowly from his view—
Vanish as o’er life’s dark river,
Pass away youth’s playthings ever.

Far away from child and shadow,
Of painted pinnace on its stream,
Far from highland moss and meadow,
And the young boy’s noontide dream;
Far from spring of crystal leaping,
Like a joy that just hath birth,
Long in silent caverns keeping,
The dark secrets of the earth;
On it goes, still wider ranging,
Clime and verdure slowly changing;
Now it leaves its mountain roses
And a softer flora gives,
All that Lotos’ bloom discloses
And “Regina’s” pictured leaves.

Hark ! a ripple strikes the ear,
A murmur midst unwritten rushes*
Sounds of unknown tongues and times,
Wild as words of Runic rhymes.
See, the crimson Ibis flushes
All the sparkling waters near,
Clouds and cloud-like temples meeting,
And the grand old Past grows clear.
Now through groves of citron tending,
Iris-lit by summer shower,
Sweet illusions fondly blending,
Ancient ages seem retreating,
As the grand old hills sink lower.
Onward sweeps the noble river,
Giving light back to its giver ;
Daybeam now, and twilight fading,
O'er it midnight stars assemble ;
Hark ! sweet voices serenading,
And soft music's spells pervading,
All the water lilies tremble !
Now a holier sound is stealing
Through the skies and charmed weather,
Faith and Love clasp hands together,
Whilst the Minster bells are pealing—
Onward, onward, ever tending ;
With a great pride grandly roaming,
Sweeping into bays, then bending
Round vast headlands, wild and foaming ;
Shallowing now o'er flooded meres,
Where tall flowering canes, like spears

* The Papyrus.

That on some vast creature quiver,
Onward sweeps the impatient river.
Hills abrupt now interposing,
But the strong thing goes to meet them—
Meets them, just as they seem closing,
Gathering all its force to greet them.
Down a narrow channel whirling,
Round vast cliffs and boulders curling,
Foam from rock and rapid riven,
Casts an iris up to Heaven.
Over precipice profound
It falls, and Heaven and Earth around
Are stunned with manifold thunder sound.

Then the river feels its glory,
Sweeping now 'midst isles of beauty,
Bathing steeps of castled story,
Feels its power, feels its duty;
Bears up navies floating o'er it,
Commerce, science, borne before it !
It had sought yet found no haven,
Where vast cliffs of basalt gloomed,
Where the forms colossal graven,
On their brows Cyclopean loomed,
Unknown signs of perished ages ;
Yet nor past nor future heeding,
Every wave turns o'er the pages
Of its mighty history's reading.

Stately as an inland ocean,
Grander, calmer, its emotion.

Like when passions strong, subsiding
In some mighty soul, find rest,
So our river, lakeward gliding,
When the storm has o'er it broken,
And the thunder peal has spoken,
Slowlier flows with even measure,
Tremulous starlight on its breast.
It looks up from its deep azure,
Light it taketh, light it giveth,
An immortal life it liveth,
Childhood, youth, and age, and prime,
One vast solitude, sublime,
And lasting as the stream of Time !

'TWAS the stripling that sent, in the days of old,
(When the archers of skill had shot in vain)
His careless shaft through the ring of gold;
Then snapped on the instant his bow in twain,
That the feat he had done, the fame he had won,
Should never by him be risked again !
Yet the man's but a churl, and false his endeavour,
Who can live on one poor, random triumph for
ever.

THE SISTERS.

'TWAS an old garden full of lawny slopes,
 With here a cedar spreading, there a pine,
 With ha-ha fences that misled the hopes,
 And many an old wall mantled with its vine.

And from the thin and wiry grass beneath
 The ancient trees, arose a perfume sweet,
 Of fir cones dry; and here, half-wild the heath,
 With its pink clustering bells ran round the feet.

And pacing slowly down a moss-paved walk,
 I met them, May and Mary—as a brother
 They looked on me: to me would freely talk—
 "No fear our hearts should soften to each other?"

I was their cousin, poor; they, noble ladies,
 Witty and wise, perchance, dark-eyed and young;
 With such a tint upon each cheek as made is
 By Spring's soft breath, 'round some fresh rose-
 bud flung.

They had a younger sister too, an Alice,
 As a fair flower, the fairer for the shade;
 Yet truth itself—as bright wine poured from chalice,
 Her heart's deep flush would oft her face pervade.

Telling its secrets, too! I had just parted
From her, at our first tryst beneath the limes;
She knew 'twas fixed that on the morn I started
From these belov'd old haunts for far-off climes:

This, too, her sisters knew, yet not aware,
That "some one's" locket round my neck I wore,
That I left England as Commander Clare,
At last promoted—all my doubtings o'er.

Perhaps if they had, they had less witty been;
"So Hubert Clare, you on the morrow—leave us,
Part from old friends at last, and each loved scene?
You scarcely seem to know how much 'twill
grieve us."

"We've waited long," said May, "for you to choose,
At least, so Mary has—should you desire?
Although she's made her mind up to refuse,
The hour's propitious—coz? Shall I retire?"

"Nay, likelier, May, see Hubert at *your* feet,
He's so close by, 'twere handier should he kneel,
He once made verses to you, 'wild but sweet,'"
("Twas true indeed!) "but yours was heart of steel."

"But perhaps 'tis softened?" Then May bent on
me
Her lovely eyes; like, as two years ago,
When I, great fool, forgot the just degree
Of rank by which she timed her heart-beats, so!

“The gem you offered still lies on the grass,”
She said, “I sometimes think that I might wear
it.”
“Sister, indeed you might; let byegones pass,
His broken sixpence, too, how could he spare
it?”

And then they laughed as soft a laugh, as breath
Of summer twilight dying on a brook
That just its surface troubles, where beneath,
As in a mirror strange, perplexed, we look.

I said, “You might be kinder, lovely May,
And graceful Mary too; you perhaps may know
That gentle Alice came of age to-day?
My Alice, for she bids me calls her so.”

“Your Alice, *sir?*” “*We* are engaged, and she
May be an Admiral’s lady—I depart
To-morrow, *sisters*, for the Baltic sea,
And hoist my pennon in the *Britomart*.

“There so let ‘byegones pass’—dear May, dear
Mary,
You with high birth must match in your degree;
May you be happy—soon. Our tastes will vary,
My love’s true heart’s her best nobility.”

THE DYING POET.

'Tis time to put the lyre aside,
 For lengthening shadows round me steal,
 And fancy's shapes of power and pride
 Pass dimly down the dark unreal.

Voices I hear, but are they those
 That to my youth their music gave?
 Or but the dying strains that close
 All dirge-like o'er life's sunset wave?

Fold up my banner? Is it right?
 Put by for aye, my sword of proof?
 Yet, have I wholly failed in fight,
 In fields where others stood aloof?

For conscience—when free men made war
 'Gainst tyrannies of sword and gown,
 And smote the slaves who'd drag the car
 Of Juggernaut, to crush them down.

The car of bigot creeds and forms,
 Worn out that fitted times gone by,
 All sacred deemed for mould, and worms,
 That left them sapless, breathless, dry.

Enough, let calmer pulses beat—
 The great, the noble lie beyond
 The broad highways where myriad feet
 To pride's careering bells respond.

Whate'er of beauty here hath been
To touch the soul, or warm the breast,
Shall seem illusive to the scene
That lies beyond life's golden west.

Whate'er of good—shall seem but weak,
Stray notes of music, borne along,
To those pure waves of sound that break
In Heaven's majestic choral song.

So rest me now; yet hopeful, aye,
And trust—the grave's dark night alone
Has spells to draw the veil away
From stars that ne'er in daylight shone.

Old scenes, old loves, old memories, sweet,
Rise where life's twilight shadows wave;
With dying hands outstretched, we greet
The friends who wait beyond the grave.

The long-lost voices that we mourn,
Like bells once heard in olden times,
Shall in some far-off clime return,
In dearer tones, and sweeter chimes.

Then pray—that as this world grows dim,
And dull the ear, and dark the sight,
A music like an angel's hymn
May rise, and all the soul be light.

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